ALBERT;

OR, THE

WILDS OF STRATHNAVERN.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

571

BY

ELIZABETH HELME,

AUTHOR OF

LOUISA, OR THE COTTAGE ON THE MOOR; DUNCAN AND PEGGY, PENITENT OF GODSTOW, ST. CLAIR OF THE ISLES, ST. MARGARET'S CAVE, MODERN TIMES, FARMER OF INGLEWOOD FOREST, PILGRIM OF THE CROSS, &c. &c.

"Amid the roses fierce Repentance rears
Her snaky crest: a quick returning pang
Shoots through the conscious heart, where honour still,
And great design, against the oppressive load
Of luxury, by fits impatient, heave."

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CHAPTER I.

Proposals of Marriage—The History of a female Heart.

THOUGH neither sir James nor Mr. Willowby were entirely pleased with their reception at Blackwood, they resolved not to be so easily repulsed, and continued their way to the Vale, where they made their proposal to Mrs. Stanhope, informing her of their previous visit to the colonel.

Mrs. Stanhope, after expressing her sense of the compliment paid her, replied —"I shall accept, without apology, the

trust colonel O'Bryan reposes in me respecting his niece, whom indeed I love as affectionately as Gertrude; and, as I have resolved never to interfere in *her* choice of a companion for life, will adopt the same conduct with Marian. I shall therefore candidly lay your offers before them, and, if you will favour me with a visit, can let you know the result in a few days."

The gentlemen, having returned their thanks, soon after took leave.

As Gertrude and Marian were out at the time of the visit, they were unacquainted with what had passed; thus, in the evening, their behaviour was equally as free as before. Mrs. Stanhope, however, had a short conversation with the colonel alone, the result of which was, simply leaving all to her prudence and his niece's choice.

On the ensuing morning, after breakfast, Mrs. Stanhope, addressing Gertrude and Marian, said, smiling—"I shall perhaps surprise you, when I say I have business

siness with each of you alone; not that it consists of any secret, but because it will be more impartially canvassed. My commission ended, you will consult together on the subject."

"My dear aunt, did you not smile as you speak, such a preparation would startle me."

"Half-an-hour each, I fancy, will serve for all our deliberations, perhaps less. May I first intrude on you, Miss Montgomery?"

"Certainly, madam."

"In ten minutes I shall expect you; you will find me in the library."

With these words she left them: for a minute they looked at each other in silence, when Marian, with her usual liveliness, said—"Nothing less than a husband could come in such a terrific form. I know it every syllable before I go. Albert, I will wager my life, has been making proposals, and we are to consult on the business."

"Dear Marian, how could so improbable an idea get into your head?"

"*Dear* Gertrude, I see no improbability in the case; were you indeed old, ugly, and lame, it might not be quite so probable."

"For pity's sake, be serious; the business is first with you, which plainly proves your error."

"Not in the least; a person of my consequence in the family must ever take the lead. I am to consult, advise, and document you; therefore, I charge you, behave like a good girl."

"Ridiculous! My dear Marian, stay as short a time as possible; I shall be impatient to learn the conference."

"I will; but be assured it is exactly as I say."

On Marian's entering the library, and taking her seat, Mrs. Stanhope said—"I shall wave all introduction, as I have no doubt you are curious to know my private business—therefore shall simply inform you,

you, that yesterday I received an unexceptionable offer of marriage for you, in point of fortune; but whether so in other respects must depend upon yourself. The colonel leaves the adjustment of the affair to me without control, and I transmit my power to you; therefore a refusal, or an acceptance, depends on yourself."

Marian, in spite of the spirits with which she entered the apartment, felt abashed, and with her eyes fixed on the ground remained silent.

"To lose you, my love, unless it was to contribute towards your own happiness," continued Mrs. Stanhope, "would be painful to me; but, under that supposition, I should be willing to submit. Sir James Montgomery was here yesterday to make offers for his son."

"To me, madam?"

"To you, Marian. Is there any thing extraordinary in such a proposal, from a man of Mr. Edward Montgomery's age, to a woman of yours?"

"I think there is, madam, where he has seen me only once or twice, which is our case."

"He appears, from the little I saw of him, lively and good-humoured, and his father seems warmly interested in the cause."

"I am sorry he is so; but an impression so recent will be soon effaced: as a cousin I can like Edward Montgomery very well, but as a husband, I cannot give him a second thought. Sir James too I can respect as an uncle, but never look up to as a parent. A number of unpleasant traits of character and disposition that I have heard my father relate respecting him, would intrude on my memory, and prevent that affection I should wish to feel for the parent of the man to whom I entrusted the happiness of my whole life."

"You will however consider this affair for a day or two before we give a decisive answer?"

"Dear madam, neither days, months,

nor

nor years, can make any alteration in my opinion. I shall undoubtedly rejoice to be on terms of friendship with my father's family, but I will never be nearer related to it."

"Our business is then settled, and I must give the most palliative answer we can devise to sir James. Will you, my love, send Gertrude to me? But again I request you to give this offer a further thought."

Marian, dismissed, ran to Miss St. Austyn, who was anxiously waiting for her.—"Marian," said she, "what is the matter? I feared my aunt had some disagreeable intelligence, and am now convinced it is so, by the glow of your complexion, and the agitation which even your cheerfulness cannot suppress."

"Mrs. Stanhope wants you directly. I have not time to enter into particulars; suffice it, she has offered me a dose I cannot possibly swallow."

"My dear Marian, be explicit."

 "Yes,

"Yes, the bitterest of all doses when taken against the inclination—a husband! But Mrs. Stanhope is waiting for you—she will wonder at your delay."

Gertrude obeyed, though with no very quick step.

"My dear girl," said Mrs. Stanhope, "I have already this morning been an unsuccessful pleader; whether I shall be more fortunate with you I know not; but this I can assure you, I am totally unprejudiced. I yesterday received a matrimonial proposal for you, unexceptionable in point of fortune and connexions, but have declined any reply until I consulted you, as your opinion will entirely guide and determine mine."

Gertrude turned pale, trembled universally, and remained silent.

"You do not even ask me the name of the party, my love; perhaps you guess?"

"Oh, no! madam, I—I cannot surmise; I am so happy under your protection, that I never wish to change it."

But

"But if an offer such as your friends could approve, and your heart could accept, what answer would you then give?"

"I would refer it to you, madam."

"My candid good girl, I will not keep you in suspense; the offer is from Mr. Willowby."

"Mr. Willowby, madam!"

"Why that astonishment, my dear girl? Did you expect such a proposal from any other quarter?"

"I certainly did not expect it from him, madam, a mere visiting acquaintance—a stranger! He was undoubtedly ridiculous enough in his compliments the evening we were at his father's; but I thought no more about it, nor indeed have I ever recollected him since."

"Those are, my dear Gertrude, poor hopes for a lover; but tell me, with that frankness which I glory to see you possess, is there any other man, not a *mere stranger*, whose addresses would have been more welcome?"

 "Ah,

"Ah, madam!" concealing her glowing face on Mrs. Stanhope's bosom, "I see—I feel you know all my folly, but do not despise me. Perhaps I have again deceived my own heart. Ah! if any one else, even Marian, should discover it, I must die with shame."

"Every secret you entrust me with, I shall hold sacred," kissing her cheek.

"To tell even you all my weakness, madam, is dreadful; for, though you may pity, you cannot respect me. A year and a half since, or but a few months more, I thought the happiness of my whole life depended on passing it with Mr. Berners. Thank Heaven! his villainy destroyed that illusion; and had not my pride suffered on the reflection of my ridiculous conduct, I could have resigned him without a sigh."

"I have long been convinced, Gertrude, that you never loved him; the whole originated in duplicity on one side, and inexperience on the other."

"Ah, madam! inexperience might *then* indeed

indeed plead for me; but now I am without excuse. My heart is certainly faulty, or it could not be guilty of such repeated errors."

"Your heart is a tender, susceptible, and virtuous one, and never needed more than the friendly guide of caution to lead it to the most praiseworthy pursuits."

"Your partiality but the more oppresses me: hear all my weakness, madam——"

"Before you proceed, my beloved girl," interrupted Mrs. Stanhope, "let me tel you, you have so partial a judge, that you need not fear a pardon."

"My more than parent! see my heart, learn all its follies, and teach me to subdue them! Strange to relate, Mr. Montgomery, of all men, from his conduct to Berners, was the most displeasing to me; his manner too was dissimilar from the romantic idea I had formed of an agreeable man; though even then, in spite of myself, I could not frequently help being pleased with him. The evening he saved Betsey

Southern, I could not withhold the tribute of admiration his conduct so well deserved; but still his hatred to Berners intruded, and I resolved not to suffer myself to be satisfied with one I considered as his enemy. My curiosity led me to Mrs. Mosely's; I was ridiculous enough to think he had some sinister motive for keeping us from seeing Betsey. That visit destroyed the illusion under which I laboured; I saw Berners in his natural colours, and my heart readily acknowledged its former injustice to Montgomery. Notwithstanding this, I yet dreaded him; he was acquainted with all my errors; and though by numberless conciliatory actions he daily gained ground in my esteem, yet in his presence I could not forget my imprudence. His illness first made me suspect my own heart, and that the more particularly, as I could not help contrasting my present feelings with what I had experienced three years before for Berners, who at that period lay dangerously ill for above

a month:

a month. For Berners I undoubtedly was interested, as for a more than common acquaintance; but neither my health nor rest were materially endangered. Ah, madam! I take shame to tell you how different was the sentiment I felt for Mr. Montgomery. Though I studied to appear calm, my heart was racked with fears, and whole nights have I passed without sleep in his extreme danger.

"You may perhaps recollect his behaviour to me in the delirium of his fever; but I have not language to describe the anguish I suffered from it, nor yet the pleasure I experienced at his recovery. Again I shunned him, and resolved to conquer my folly; when escaping from Berners, I forgot all caution, and almost flew into his arms. To complete all, Marian has perpetually been feeding my folly by declaring he loves me, and I have insensibly become more familiar, and lost my fears of him. In short, my heart has even sometimes whispered her suspicions were

true; for, though he never told me so in words, every look and action have appeared to confirm it; and excuse me if I confess, I was discomposed at the name of Willowby, when I flattered myself it might have been another."

"My noble, candid girl, you will force me to discover a secret, which however in this case I am sure I should be pardoned for disclosing. Montgomery has long loved you, but, with that prudence and honour that mark all his actions, wished to owe the whole of his happiness to your own heart."

Gertrude could not speak; her glowing face still remained concealed on the bosom of her aunt.

"Though I have proved to you how very ill I can keep a secret entrusted to me by the colonel and Montgomery, yet fear not; I pledge you my honour that yours shall never escape me, unless you require it. Now," continued she, affectionately saluting her, "I will leave you until

until you are more composed, and also employ Marian, that she may not intrude on you at the present moment. For Mr. Willowby, I suppose I may answer him without consulting you farther."

CHAPTER II.

Suspense—A Lover agreeably surprised —An unsuccessful Journey to London.

Mrs. Stanhope joined Marian, and some conversation had taken place, when the colonel was announced. The veteran ventured no question, but his anxious looks sufficiently explained the nature of his sentiments to Mrs. Stanhope, who at length said—" I must inform you, colonel, that I have been an unsuccessful negociator this morning; Miss Montgomery, to whom

I first

I first applied, absolutely refuses her cousin; and with Gertrude I have not been more fortunate for Mr. Willowby."

"Thank God!" said the colonel, with an emotion of pleasure which he could not conceal; but endeavouring to suppress it, he added—"Pardon me, madam, has Miss St. Austyn *indeed* refused Mr. Willowby?"

"Peremptorily, as your niece has also done Mr. Montgomery."

"I will love that sweet girl for this as long as I live; but for you, *saucebox*," turning to Marian, "how came you to refuse your cousin? Perhaps it is the only chance you will ever have of being made a lady."

"Most probably it is, sir; I did not consider that circumstance, but must notwithstanding run the hazard."

"I am sorry for the boy," returned the colonel; "but for old Montgomery, I am glad his pride has got such a rap on the knuckles, as a refusal from poor Albert's daughter."

"My

"My cousin's spirits are too good for him to heed so trifling a disappointment; and as I now learn Mr. Willowby is in the same predicament, they may console each other."

"Well," returned the colonel, "though my visit has been short, I must be gone; to confess the truth, I was anxious to learn the event of the affair. There is one at home too, who, for all he puts the best face on the business, is not rolling on a bed of roses."

The colonel soon after took leave, and Mrs. Stanhope retired to write to Mr. Willowby and sir James Montgomery, judging it more agreeable that they should learn their disappointment alone than in her presence.

Albert had, during the morning, suffered sufficiently to convince him how near Gertrude was to his heart. Anxious to know her resolution respecting Willowby, he resolved to ride over to the Vale, but a few moments reflection determined him

to

to remain at home.—"Should she," said he, mentally, "have accepted him, I might not be sufficiently master of myself to conceal the blow it might give me; I will therefore bear the torment of suspense; if she refuses him, I shall be overpaid for my anxiety; if otherwise, I shall at least conceal my weakness."

On the colonel's departure, he declined accompanying him, though without expressing his motive, and after some time took up a volume of Seneca; but as no moral in that author could resolve his doubts, he threw down the book, and took a walk round to the different workmen, and so far succeeded in his attempt to recover himself, that he returned apparently more calm.

The colonel soon after entered, when taking off his hat, and wiping his face, he seated himself in silence. Albert for some minutes constrained himself sufficiently not to hazard a question; but observing his uncle was in no haste to disclose what he

he had heard, he at length said—"You have been at the Vale this morning, sir?"

"Yes, sir, I have been at the Vale; and, as I can readily surmise what you wish to know, inform you, that your sister has rejected young Montgomery; on which account, though I did not choose to say so to her, you will please to remember that I mean to give her an additional two thousand pounds."

"I hope I shall never forget any trait of your goodness, sir. May I entreat to know whether you have heard the result of Mr. Willowby's application?"

"Look you, Albert. In this case you have acted like a fool; but, according to the proverb, *No man is wise at all times;* and as I conclude you only meant to oblige me in the affair, you will doubtless bear with patience whatever happens."

Montgomery's eyes were fixed on the colonel; but no emotion from which he could judge appeared in either his features or manner.

"I fear,

"I fear, sir, I cannot appropriate to myself the merit of only obliging you in this business; I certainly could have loved Gertrude, nay I do love her, beyond all women; but if she has preferred another to me, I must bear it with patience; or rather, I *will* bear it with fortitude."

"True, true, that will be acting like a man. She is a charming girl, it must be confessed; but there are many others as handsome. To be sure, it would not be pleasant to see Willowby and her flourishing all about the country as soon as the honeymoon was over."

"I will never see it," said Albert.

"Why, what the devil will you do with yourself? We are very near neighbours; and Gertrude, who is naturally affectionate, will still be much with her aunt. Don't you think Mrs. Stanhope will be very fond of *her* children?"

Albert walked to the window.—"My dear sir," replied he, "you torture me; tell me at once the worst; if she has accepted him,

him, I know you will excuse my absence, until the bustle of preparation is over, and I can recover myself sufficiently to venture into your presence."

"Well then, sir, summon all the resolution, fortitude, and philosophy you have talked so much about, and know that the girl——" A real or feigned cough prevented his continuing; Albert considered it the latter, and a sentiment of satisfaction restrained him from endeavouring to interrupt it.

"I wish you would tell Mrs. Mosely to mix some of that stuff for my cold I took the other night. Those sharp winds don't agree with me—I have got a devilish bad cough."

"It appeared to seize you very suddenly, sir," answered Albert.

"None of your inuendoes, sir; it was Miss St. Austyn that stuck in my stomach; and for all your hypocrisy, *you* are upon the tenter-hooks of curiosity."

An involuntary smile that played upon the

the colonel's features yet more reassured Albert.

"I confess it, sir; but as I am convinced, however you may be displeased with me, that my misfortunes will never in reality be a subject of mirth to you, I conceive you have rather played upon my feelings."

"What the plague, then, do you think the girl has refused him for you?"

"Not for me, sir: but, my dear uncle, has she *indeed* given a denial?"

"Yes, sir, to the great impeachment of her understanding, for I never thought her a fool before. You have had a hairbreadth escape—take care how you tempt another."

In the evening, the uncle and nephew paid a visit at the Vale. In Albert's address to Gertrude there was an involuntary softness; on her part, a consciousness that made her doubly interesting; for though she was assured of the honour of her aunt in keeping her secret, yet the recollection of the confession she had made, now that the

the object of it stood before her, dyed her face with blushes.

As they were conversing cheerfully, the colonel said—" I never properly enjoy the comfort that such a society would afford, from the reflection that St. Austyn is not of the party. Hang me, if I would not travel almost any distance, were I but assured of meeting him! in which case he would not easily get rid of me again."

" Indeed, colonel, your unwearied friendship for him can never be sufficiently acknowledged," answered Mrs. Stanhope. " I have thought seriously on the subject, and have resolved to take a journey to town and question his solicitor, who, I have no doubt, knows his residence; and as my relationship is so near, he may be the less scrupulous of making the discovery to me than to any other person."

This resolve was warmly seconded by the whole party, all pressing to accompany her; but that she entirely declined, saying —" My business in town will be complet-

ed

ed in the course of a day or two; and as I have no doubt Mrs. Mosely will be pleased to accompany me, I shall entreat you to spare her, as I shall prefer her to a younger person; and we may in all probability be lodged at her old house."

This arrangement silenced all parties, both Marian and Gertrude being more satisfied, when they found a person so confidential as Mrs. Mosely was to accompany her.

"My resolution once formed," said Mrs. Stanhope, "I am always impatient until it is executed; I will therefore depart on the day after to-morrow, if Mrs. Mosely can be prepared."

On the following afternoon, Mrs. Stanhope received two letters, one from Mr. Willowby, the other from sir James Montgomery; both were written with visible pique, and the latter not without a reflection at the colonel, but which she entirely suppressed, when she informed him that she had heard from them.

On

On the appointed morning she set off for London, where, on her arrival, she was immediately suited with apartments at Mrs. Mosely's late house, and by the means of Frederic's banker, obtained the address of his solicitor; on whom she waited in the course of the second day after her arrival.

After the compliments usual at a first meeting, she informed him of her business, and entreated that, if he knew Frederic's present abode, he would disclose it.

"I do not ask," said she, "from a motive of idle curiosity: Frederic's imprudence is already known to me; but, as I have also learnt that he has taken all the possible steps towards testifying an alteration of conduct, I should hold myself unpardonable to be wanting on my part; and therefore, as his nearest relation, wish to be his principal, nay his only creditor. You, from having the settlement of his affairs, are doubtless acquainted with every particular, and will confer a lasting favour

on me by disclosing what you know. I have already declared my motive; it is to make him happy, and reinstate him in the rank in life from which his youthful follies have excluded him."

"I should not consider myself Mr. St. Austyn's friend, madam," returned he, "did I make any concealment in such a case; but I give you my most solemn word, that I am unacquainted with his residence, if it is not in Yorkshire; there I direct what letters I have occasion to write, but which in truth are only few, as the whole of his affairs is settled with the strictest honour; nor do I think he owes a shilling, except the gross sum for which he has engaged his estate for three years."

Mrs. Stanhope inquired the particulars of the arrangement; which being informed of, she said—"His stipend must then be very small, comparatively to what he has been accustomed to."

"Not more, madam," replied he, "than a hundred and fifty pounds yearly, as I

know

know upwards of three hundred are appropriated to the necessary expence and support of the old servants at his seat in Yorkshire."

This trait of character was so congenial to Mrs. Stanhope's own feelings, that half Frederic's follies were obliterated by it.

"I am rejoiced," said she, "that he still preserves his humanity; it convinces me that he is yet worthy my regard."

Mrs. Stanhope soon after took leave, vexed that she could not discover her nephew; but, on the whole, pleased to find, that though he had acted imprudently, he had fortitude sufficient to make himself the only sufferer—a circumstance that was plainly evinced by his honour in discharging his debts, and his conduct to the old domestics.

CHAPTER II.

A Declaration—A Lover's Fears—And a severe Loss.

In the meantime the family at the Vale, and that at Blackwood, though both wished the return of Mrs. Stanhope, passed their hours not unpleasantly. The colonel's visits were indeed short, as he hoped Albert's doubts must now be removed, and that he would make an offer of his heart to Miss St. Austyn.

In this surmise he was not deceived; for, in the afternoon after Mrs. Stanhope's departure, being alone with his sister and Gertrude, he said—"Will you forgive me, Miss St. Austyn, if before my sister and yourself I open my whole heart, and entreat

treat your opinion on a subject that must constitute its future happiness or misery? To Marian, with the name of sister, I add that of friend; but what word can I find sufficiently expressive of the sentiment I feel for you! Friendship in its most exalted state, enlivened by an affection which I flatter myself is proof against time or age. For many months I struggled with an inclination I in vain endeavoured to conquer; for I could not forget the distance fortune had placed between us: but at length emboldened by the kindness and familiarity with which you have honoured me, encouraged by the parental goodness of my uncle, and permit me to add, the friendship of Mrs. Stanhope, I dare offer you a heart even yet more anxious for your happiness than its own."

Gertrude was too much affected to reply.

"Will you not speak to me?" at length resumed he. "See in me only what you wish; my ultimate desire is to pass my life

with you, and by all possible means endeavour to make you happy; or, if I have the misfortune not to meet your approbation, I will, whatever it may cost me, withdraw my suit, as I cannot persecute those I love."

Gertrude's emotion was too great to be suppressed, and she burst into tears.

"My beloved Gertrude," said Marian, "*my* sister, whatever may be your determination in this case, will you not speak to Albert? You are, I know, above dissimulation."

"I—do not wish to dissemble," answered Gertrude, hesitating; "indeed I cannot express my thoughts—my aunt will soon return—I have no will but hers."

The ardent temper of Albert did not sufficiently allow for the timidity of the conscious Gertrude, who, though at the height of her wishes, yet remembered her folly respecting Berners.

"I will leave you to-night," said he with a sigh; "I am convinced I have distressed you.

you: To-morrow, if I may intrude, you perhaps will condescend to be more explicit. I must owe my happiness to yourself alone, or from you receive the destruction of my hopes."

Marian, who more properly judged the real cause of Gertrude's emotion, replied in her usual manner—"Well, begone now, and come as early as you please to-morrow—we will each give you a hand in token of friendship."

Albert kissed the offered hand of Marian; that of Gertrude was merely passive, and trembled so excessively, that it increased his doubts. He had no sooner left them, than Gertrude, throwing herself into Marian's arms, said—"Why would your brother act thus? In Mrs. Stanhope's presence I should not have behaved so foolishly."

"Truly as I love Mrs. Stanhope, my dear Gertrude, I must say my brother's happiness depends entirely on yourself. Albert, I am convinced, fears that his ad-

dresses are displeasing to you; and shall I candidly own, I am almost of the same opinion?"

"Ah, Marian, you little know my heart. Had I never known Berners, with what pleasure could I have accepted your brother! As it is, consider how I must feel humiliated when he remembers my imprudence!"

"And had you indeed, my dear Gertrude, no other motive?"

"Undoubtedly none. I could not object to Mr. Montgomery, if I felt myself his equal in point of merit: as it is, that cruel remembrance is for ever intruding— in the offer of his affection, how strongly did it cross my memory! and should I accept his hand, still would Berners empoison all my happiness."

"If that is all," exclaimed Marian in a transport, "banish the thought for ever, my sister, my friend, the chosen of my beloved brother's heart! Albert is worthy your affection; he will force you, by his unwearied

unwearied attention, to forget all that can give you pain—Would to Heaven he had not gone so speedily! I saw he was unhappy; but to-morrow at least, give me leave to say, before you see him, that you do not forbid him to hope at some future period the blessing he aspires to."

"My dear Marian, act in a manner that you think proper; but I could wish Mrs. Stanhope's presence to sanction my conduct."

"She will sanction it, and, I am convinced, will not blame the liberty we have taken in her absence."

"I am convinced with you, Marian, that she approves Mr. Montgomery. Were I not so, I would never consider him in the light he desires; nay, why to you should I be ashamed to confess that I almost desire myself?"

Such was the purport of the discourse between Marian and Gertrude, which was prolonged to a late hour; while in the interim Albert had reached home, suffering

all those uncertainties, doubts, and fears, that in some measure are attendant on love. One word, one look of affection from Gertrude, would have banished them; but her extreme timidity and confusion he placed to a cause very opposite from the reality, and considered her former behaviour, which had influenced him to make the declaration, as only the consequence of the affection she had for his sister, and the friendship between their families.

The colonel immediately discovered that something had discomposed his temper, and soon learned the occasion.

"Ah, sir!" said Albert, "how sanguine were you in this cause! nay, how much more so have I been! But, as you once said, my vanity has indeed misled me."

"Why, what the devil, then," returned the colonel, "has she downright refused you?"

"Refused me! No, sir: but had she felt any affection for me, would she have suffered such confusion, such an apparent struggle?

struggle? Would she have placed the whole merit, should she acquiesce, to Mrs. Stanhope's commands? Nay, stronger than all those circumstances, would she have wept?"

"Zounds, is this all?" replied the colonel: "why, you know no more of women than if you had never seen one from your birth. Why, all those little *turnings* and *windings* are as natural to them as eating, drinking, and sleeping."

"Perhaps so, sir; but I had hoped, nay I believe Miss St. Austyn above such little arts. The man that she can esteem she will generously tell so, and seek no subterfuge to conceal it."

"Don't provoke me, Albert, with your vagaries. Did you expect the girl to snatch you in her arms, and return you thanks for the honour you conferred upon her? She spoke, like a prudent girl; but I shall talk no more on the subject to-night: perhaps by to-morrow evening you may be better satisfied."

Albert intruded the discourse no farther, though he remained pensive and thoughtful; in truth, he was so busied in reflection on the uncertainty of his own situation, that he did not remark that his uncle during the remainder of the evening seemed as equally lost in thought as himself.

The next morning Albert rose early, and to his great surprise, as it was unusual, found the colonel down stairs before him. The breakfast passed with little discourse on either side, though Albert did not fail to express his fears for his uncle's health, whose silence and gravity gave him real concern. At length the breakfast concluded, the colonel addressing him, said—

"I was in hopes to have seen you in a happier frame of temper last night, which made me protract informing you of an event of much importance both to you and myself. When I was last in town, I acted very foolishly, in entrusting all my letters, leases, bonds, and in short all my valuable papers, in the hands of a fellow whom Vansitart

sitart recommended as an agent, and who, I hear, by the post of yesterday, is gone abroad with the property in his hands, in which case I fear we are inevitably ruined; but as I have no doubt Miss St. Austyn loves you, all will yet go well."

"Merciful God!" said Albert, "my dear sir, not for myself, but for you, I feel severely. Something may perhaps be recovered; or, should it not, your half-pay, and what property was independent of this misfortune, will still secure the comforts you are accustomed to. Your Albert must no longer be a weight upon your generosity, but his affection and duty shall be doubled."

"Zounds! hold your tongue; you will make me as foolish as a wench, and then I shall not tell you half what I intended."

"My dear uncle, I am silent; but if there is any step I can take, command me."

"I shall consider it until to-morrow, when we will use what measures may be necessary; in the meantime I shall take a

long

long ride, and in the evening will meet you at the Vale."

"Oh, sir, how can I go there? Would to Heaven I had known this misfortune yesterday, what pain might I not have spared both Gertrude and myself!"

"Own the whole to her—if you don't find her a generous girl I will be hanged; and with sixteen thousand pounds a man may be as happy as with sixty."

"Pardon me, sir, if in the present circumstance I decline all thoughts of her. To owe such a debt to her affection, were she generous enough to make the offer, is a greater sacrifice than I could accept."

"A little while since," said the colonel, "you wished to owe all to her love; now you have turned to another point, and blow hot and cold with the same mouth."

"My dear uncle," said Albert, "will, I know, make some allowance in this case for honour."

"Yes, sir; and to convince you we will have no clandestine doings, tell the girls what

what has happened; it will save me the trouble of blundering it out to them. As I said before, I will call there for you in the evening."

Albert would have raised more objections, but the colonel silenced all by saying—"If you have any affection for me, let me have *my own way*. You shall see me early." With these words he left Albert, mounted his horse, and rode off.

MAHAL. * THE TANJORE

CHAP-

CHAPTER IV.

A severe Blow—A Trial of Affection.

For some time after his departure, Montgomery could not collect himself sufficiently to arrange his thoughts, which when he had effected, he was yet more puzzled: for his uncle, in his money transactions, though generous in the extreme, had ever shewn a regularity and circumspection that appeared to secure him from being easily deluded. At all events, severely as it might cost him, he resolved to relinquish Gertrude, and bitterly repented having the day before declared the secret of his heart to her.

To relate to either her or to Marian what he had heard, gave him pain; to conceal it

it was an act he could not think of; yet he wished he had been better informed of the circumstances, fearful of increasing the loss that was sustained, or inspiring hopes that might be disappointed. For himself he felt little; but for the colonel and Marian he suffered all that a son or brother could in equally-distressing circumstances. —"I rejoice," said he mentally, with a forced resolution, "that I have not the additional pang of being possessed of Gertrude's heart: how much more must I then have endured to relinquish her! In that case the stroke would have been worse than death." At that moment the servant entered with a note from Marian, which he tore open, and read as follows:—

"MY DEAR BROTHER,

"As we do not purpose going out to-day, we shall be glad if my uncle and yourself will pass the afternoon with us. My happiness is too strongly interwoven with yours to suffer me to conceal what

what I know will give you pleasure, particularly as I saw you left us last night in some uneasiness. Suffice it to say, that you can never love Gertrude half so well as she deserves; her confusion and tears originated in a cause so truly delicate, estimable, and flattering to you, that, if you do not endeavour to banish the remembrance from her memory for ever, I must respect you less than I have heretofore done. Reconcile her to herself; convince her that you have forgotten Berners, and her heart is wholly yours. Adieu.

"MARIAN MONTGOMERY."

Albert's feelings had before been principally confined to the colonel and Marian, but he now felt for himself.—"Was this blow wanting to complete my vexation?" exclaimed he. "To be forced at such a moment to love her a thousand times better than before, yet to be necessitated to relinquish her! Would to Heaven my uncle had taken on himself the task of informing

forming them of what has happened! Yet," continued he, after a momentary pause, "he would not have done it so cautiously as I shall, and might perhaps have dropped a word that I could have wished suppressed; for his affection prevents his seeing the impropriety of my thinking of Gertrude if his fortune is lost. However I may suffer, I hope I shall act worthy the dictates of my conscience, and the character Mrs. Stanhope, I am convinced, has of my honour."

Such were his reflections during the whole morning until dinner was announced, when the servant informed him that the colonel had said he should dine out. —"My poor uncle," said Albert mentally, "wishes to conceal his concern, and the least return I can make is to behave in a manner to convince him that it has no painful effect on me."

In the afternoon Albert walked to the Vale, when he found his sister and Gertrude waiting his arrival. His features were

were too expressive for them not to discover that something had discomposed him; and though Gertrude was too timid to question, Marian felt no such restraint, and entreated him to inform her of the cause.

"We expected you two hours since," said she: "I am convinced nothing trivial could have detained you; tell us therefore what was the reason?"

"My dear sister, you judge truly: the cause must indeed be momentous that could detain me from you."

"For Heaven's sake, what is the matter? where is my uncle? is he well? let us at once know the truth."

Montgomery entreated her not to surmise worse than what in reality was the case; then with great caution informed them of every circumstance that he knew of the loss his uncle had sustained, concluding with saying to Gertrude—"I will not attempt, my dear Miss St. Austyn, to relate to you what this unhappy event has cost me—not for my own sake, but for

those

those a thousand times more dear. Relinquishing you is the only point in which I am vulnerable. Would to Heaven I had spared you the trouble of yesterday, and myself the anguish the remembrance must ever bring with it!"

"Indeed," returned Gertrude, for the first time breaking silence since he began the account, "I think you appear to consider this business in too serious a light. The man may be perhaps stopped, or the loss may not be so great as you apprehend: but even should it, thank God, the colonel has enough to support him in a manner conformable to his rank. Marian will still have a tender aunt and sister—and you," continued she, with some hesitation of voice, "will have friends with whom the loss of fortune can make no difference."

Montgomery was not master of his feelings; he pressed her hand to his lips—"Why will you," said he, "by such enchanting gentleness, redouble the pang I must suffer to relinquish you for ever?"

"Indeed,

"Indeed, Albert," said Marian, "the more I reflect on this subject, the less I can understand it: though my uncle's loss may be great, it cannot be so heavy as you apprehend."

"I know not particulars, for out of tenderness to me he did not mention the affair until this morning, when to avoid a discussion he hastily left me; nor did he dine at home, but said he would meet me here this evening."

"I am almost convinced," said Gertrude, whose restraint was entirely banished by the unhappiness of her friends, "that you will find this disagreeable affair not so bad as you suspect; but should it even equal your fears, you will not, I am sure, forget that fortitude you have hitherto so eminently shewn."

"I might indeed bear the loss of fortune with calmness; but to have a treasure snatched from me at the instant I learn its value, is a trial beyond my power to support. I even feel myself unprincipled in

holding

holding this conversation with you in the present state of my affairs—a conversation, however forced by anguish, that I cannot answer to my own heart. Why did I come hither? Why did I attempt a danger beyond the natural weakness of man to sustain with honour? Never again will I venture it. I may be unhappy; but I will not be despicable."

"My friend," said Gertrude, with a familiarity she had never before used with Albert, "pardon me, if I say you do not exert the patience that I once thought distinguished you."

"Had the loss cost me any thing less than *yourself*, I could have borne it; but to love almost to enthusiasm, and to judge by your enchanting condescension that I am not totally indifferent, requires no common share of calmness to support."

"And why?" said Gertrude blushing, fixing her eyes on the ground, and hesitating: "will it render it necessary that—that you should no longer distinguish me?"

"Distinguish

"Distinguish you!" replied Albert: "the man who looks up to you, Miss St. Austyn, honours himself. Pardon me if I bid you farewell. I am not equal to conversation; I momentarily act in the manner I wish to avoid.—My dear Marian, tell my uncle I am returned to Blackwood; I will endeavour to recover my spirits to meet him: be you equally cautious not to let him see your uneasiness.—Miss St. Austyn, may every happiness attend you!"

"You must not leave us in this state of mind," answered Gertrude, laying her hand on his arm: "Would to Heaven Mrs. Stanhope was here!—Could you for a moment suppose," continued she, turning from him with the utmost confusion, "that a decrease of fortune could influence either my aunt or myself? If you did, you mistook her character; she is above so despicable a consideration, and has long since generously declared, that the man my heart could approve should without restriction be her choice. That man—why will you

force

force me to so painful a declaration?—is now before me."

"Merciful Heaven, support my resolution and rectitude!" exclaimed Montgomery, sinking at her feet. "Sorrow I have borne with resignation, and poverty with honour: let them not fail me in this trying hour!"

His head sunk on the sofa by the side of Gertrude; his tears wetted her hand, while hers dropped on his face.

"We will talk no more on the subject," said Gertrude with assumed calmness: "you shall pass the evening with us; and for any thing else, Mrs. Stanhope at her return will be the best arbitrator."

"Though," answered Albert, "I would entrust my life to her decision, yet I must not in this case depend upon her goodness. The remembrance of your angelic sweetness in this hour of trial shall never be obliterated from my memory; but Mrs. Stanhope's honour, and your own, both demand that you do not accept an unequal match.

match. Could I endure, when my very soul was yours, to hear it whispered, that some sinister motive influenced my conduct, and that your person, whose beauty is its least recommendation, was but a secondary incentive? No: that reflection will, when all others fail, force me to act uprightly. Your conduct this day has made my love at once my pride and glory, and I *will* act worthy the sentiment it has inspired."

"We will, as I before said," returned Gertrude, "now instantly drop the subject; it is too painful for me longer to support. Do not let the colonel find us discomposed. My beloved Marian," added she, "will you ring the bell for tea? I only require the company of Mrs. Stanhope, to regain my brother, and to see my friends cheerful, to make me one of the happiest girls in the universe."

CHAPTER V.

A Confession—A Surprise—And a token of Peace.

MARIAN was employed at the tea-table, and Gertrude, seated on a sofa, had insensibly made place for Albert, who, though he had resolved to relinquish her for ever, had not resolution that evening to make the first effort. The party were silent, except at intervals a single question, answered with a monosyllable, broke on the reflections of each. Gertrude, with downcast eyes, was scrutinizing her own conscience, whether she had not said too much to Montgomery for delicacy to allow; but the previous approbation of her aunt and his distress pleaded the excuse,

 and

and reconciled her to what in other circumstances she would have judged highly improper. Albert, his eyes fixed on her face, where he traced a thousand graces he had never before discovered, was ruminating on the loss his uncle had sustained, and ardently wishing that it might not be found great enough to force him to resign the woman for whose sake he could alone prize wealth. Marian's anxiety was equal to that of either: Albert was scarcely more dear to her than Gertrude; and thus to find all the schemes of happiness her ardent fancy had formed for them at once destroyed, overpowered her with uneasiness.

Thus were they situated when the colonel entered. As his eye glanced at Albert, seated on the same sofa by Gertrude, no one would have supposed, from the pleasure expressed in his countenance, that he had recently suffered so severe a loss.

"My dear uncle," said Marian, rising and affectionately kissing him, "why would

would you leave us to-day? Have you any trouble that your children's duty and affection should not share?"

"You are a good girl; but don't talk to me just now.—Albert has then told you—"

"Mr. Montgomery," answered Gertrude, "has informed us that he fears you have sustained a considerable loss; but, my dear colonel, you have not lost your friends; had I lost my fortune, independent of my family, I know no one I would so soon be obliged to as yourself."

"My beloved Miss St. Austyn, you are an angel! Had I a million, it should be at your disposal," returned the colonel.

"Money will not purchase happiness. I have, thank Heaven, enough to satisfy myself and my friends too, unless they are very unreasonable. Some," continued she, timidly glancing at Albert, "are too proud to share the fortune of even those they pretend to esteem most: but in these cases there can be no affection. Are you not of my opinion, colonel?"

 "I am

"I am of opinion that you are the sweetest girl in the world," returned the colonel.

"Ah, sir!" said Albert, "if you knew the proofs of goodness and condescension I have encountered this day, you would declare me at once the man in the world the most to be envied, and the most to be pitied."

"Nay, if *you* confess yourself to be envied, the devil take pity! not a grain have I to bestow. My dear Miss St. Austyn, what day do you expect your aunt? Egad, I am impatient for her return!"

"My aunt cannot remain absent more than two days. I will write to her to-morrow, and let her know this affair. Have you any message I can communicate to her?"

"None, but to tell her I am the happiest old fellow under the sun. Mind, Albert, this very day month I will give the merriest, if not the finest entertainment to the neighbouring peasantry they ever enjoyed in

in their lives. We will have no masquerading in fool's jackets—every man shall play the fool bare-faced: our poor neighbours shall be feasted—(our rich ones are feasted every day)—and the man that dares but to wrinkle his brow shall be kicked out of the company. As far as five hundred pounds will permit, beef, strong beer, and plum-pudding, shall be the pass-word."

"The whole party began to think him intoxicated.

"We will talk of this to-morrow, sir; it grows late—will you permit me to attend you home?" said Albert.

"No, sir, not yet. What say you, Miss St. Austyn—will you do an old fellow the honour of dancing with him at his rustic assembly?"

"If you mean yourself, willingly, sir, should it take place."

"That it shall do, by jingo! We can well afford five hundred pounds in such a cause—cannot we, Albert?"

"What cause, sir?" said Gertrude.

Montgomery, who momentarily dreaded that the colonel should say something that might distress Gertrude, resolved if possible to stop him, and therefore answered—"In all probability, sir, I shall not be at Blackwood at the period you mention; it is necessary I should make some exertion to relieve you from a useless weight: such an expence too as you propose, on calmer reflection I am convinced you will find of no real utility, and therefore will perhaps decline it."

"I shall not decline it, sir; and as to your leaving Blackwood, 'tis all stuff; I'll trust you now for that."

"It is a very necessary step, sir, both for your interest and my happiness," answered Montgomery with a sigh.

"It is very necessary that you remain there, both for my interest and your *own* happiness. Look you, Albert, you have a good while been rather deranged in your understanding, and last night gave me a convincing proof that nothing but an active

remedy

remedy could remove your complaint. You may recollect, I threatened, some time since, if you did not get better, to punish your body for the good of your soul. I have done so; my recipe has been efficacious—you have regained your understanding, and I have regained my fortune; or, more properly, I never lost it. How could you be such a fool to believe it?"

An exclamation of surprise escaped from each of the party.

"Never lost it, sir!" repeated Montgomery. "Is it possible you could so wantonly agonize me? Could I suppose *you* would stoop to such a——"

"Lie! I suppose you mean, sir? But in this case I am adamant to all you can say; I have fortified my mind by reading the patience of Job, and would advise you to have recourse to the same remedy."

Albert was evidently discomposed—"I am sorry, sir," replied he, "that you could for a moment think me capable of taking so unpardonable a liberty with you: the

word *subterfuge* certainly occurred, but I suppressed it: and for the book of Job, if it could furnish an excuse for the treatment Miss St. Austyn has received, I would certainly read it, not only on my own account, but yours."

"Egad, that's true enough! Miss St. Austyn, I humbly beg your pardon; by my soul and honour, I will never deceive you again wilfully! Albert, however, was most to blame; his folly forced me upon this step."

"If not intruding, colonel," replied Gertrude, "for what utility was such a plan intended?"

"It was," said the colonel, with some confusion, and hesitating, "to—to——"

"Make me miserable and ridiculous," cried Albert. "Pardon me, Miss St. Austyn, I pledge you my honour that I have not deceived you more than I was myself deceived. I proposed to banish myself from your presence; you will now act worthy yourself to forbid me from it: however such

such a prohibition may grieve me, I shall confess it just."

"Merciful Heaven! colonel," said Gertrude, the thought suddenly striking her, "could you for a moment wrong me so much as to suppose me influenced by fortune?"

"See, sir," exclaimed Montgomery, "the effect of your schemes: can you excuse this act to Mrs. Stanhope? Nay, can you excuse it to your own heart? My beloved Miss St. Austyn, ridiculous as this affair is, you indeed mistake it; the favour was entirely meant for me. For pity's sake then, I conjure you, suppress your tears—they distract me! Thus at your feet——"

"Ay," said the colonel, "you have reason enough to beg her pardon, though I confess I need her forgiveness the most of the two; therefore, my dear Miss St. Austyn, do not refuse it. To be sure, I cannot kneel quite so gracefully as the young gentleman there; but if you will excuse the stiffness of my knees, and the

little sciatica I have in my hip, behold me, thus lowly, entreat you to forget my folly!"

There was something so truly comic in the colonel's posture, kneeling by the side of Albert, that Marian burst into a fit of laughter; nor could Gertrude have refrained, notwithstanding her recent tears, had not the strong vexation that marked the features of Montgomery restrained her.

"Miss St. Austyn," said he, rising from her feet, "I will entreat some future opportunity to convince you of my innocence in this ridiculous business: I am too much disturbed to remain in your presence this evening; permit me, therefore, to wish you a good-night." With those words he immediately left them.

"So," said the colonel, "he is gone in a fine huff! He is a good fellow, and I don't like to vex him; but there was no help for it in this case."

"My dear sir," replied Marian, "my brother is particularly wounded, as it has

caused him to appear in so deceitful a light to Miss St. Austyn. I wish he had not been so hasty in disclosing what you had told him."

"Egad, he could not help it! I insisted that he should immediately inform you of it, as I would have no clandestine concealment."

"What use, colonel, as I before asked, was it to answer?" said Gertrude. "If, as I cannot avoid surmising, it was to try what effect the loss of fortune would have on me, you have indeed grossly mistaken my character."

"My dear Miss St. Austyn, I cannot bear you to think thus; and will, however disagreeable, rather disclose the truth than suffer you to remain in such an error."

"Indeed, sir, such a reparation is due to Miss St. Austyn," said Marian.

"I confess it, and have given my word, and would, if necessary, my bond, never more to deceive her wilfully. Albert, I am convinced, has always, since he first

saw

saw you, Miss St. Austyn, loved you; nay, he confessed it to me the other day, but fearful of gaining your affection, he had declined declaring his real sentiments. I worked him up into a fine vagary about Willowby, but even then he would not consent to make the first offer. I need not repeat to you that, with all his good qualities, he is a fool and romancer in love matters; and as for vanity, he has no more than my old shoes; for, had he been blear-eyed, hump-backed, and crooked-legged, he could not have been more diffident of his success. In short, he would not believe that it was possible that you could have any esteem for him; and, no longer ago than yesterday, came home so dispirited and dismal, that I was provoked beyond my patience. Your charming diffidence, my dear Miss St. Austyn, was attributed to dislike, disgust, and I know not what, until a resolution I had before hastily formed came into my mind, and which was simply as follows:—So far from

thinking

thinking you could be influenced by fortune, I knew that, did you consider Albert unhappily situated, you would at once set his heart at ease, by declaring your sentiments, whatever they might be, respecting him; and on this very morning told him the tale which he repeated to you, insisting, as a point of honour, that he should immediately declare it. I well knew that his duty and affection, had I remained at home, would have forced the secret from me, and therefore, like a prudent general, resolved to retreat from danger, and leave him until evening; when, at all events, I determined to declare the truth; for I could not have had the heart to punish him for a longer period. On my entrance—pardon me, Miss St. Austyn, perhaps I was too sanguine—I thought, amidst all his melancholy, for he had declared to me this morning he would never more presume to think of you, that there was a pleasure on his countenance, and an enchanting softness in yours, that flattered

flattered me my scheme had succeeded. Your sweetly-soothing words confirmed my hopes; I was not master of my joy; it overflowed, and in the moment of rapture, I declared the falsehood I had devised. Such is my crime; I have, on my honour, made a fair confession; I only am to blame, and on me alone let your anger fall."

"Indeed, colonel," replied Gertrude, blushing, "I cannot call your conduct generous; it has made me act very foolishly."

"If it has made you give the smallest spark of hope to Albert, I cannot be hypocrite enough to deny the satisfaction I shall experience. You must be convinced that he loves you sincerely, and on reflection will not be sorry if you have spared him some very uneasy hours."

"I retract nothing I have said to Mr. Montgomery," returned Gertrude; "but I could have wished my aunt to have been present."

"Ah! Miss St. Austyn, I dared not have taken the liberty had she been at home,

home, nor yet would I have done it in her absence, had I not been convinced that my nephew had her good wishes for his success—though she declined all interference, and generously declared, that uninfluenced by fortune, your choice should be hers."

"I am not to learn my aunt's goodness, and therefore hope she will excuse my folly, in so easily believing your fabricated tale, colonel."

"I see you do not forgive me," said he; "what expiation can I make?"

"I require none; indeed I feel no anger, colonel; let the business be forgotten," answered she, holding out her hand.

"Heaven bless you, my sweet girl! May I call you one of the props of my old age, and the pride of my heart?"

"I hope I shall deserve your affection," answered she, timidly.

"My own Albert and Marian are not more dear to me than yourself; but now

I have

I have obtained my pardon, I must hasten home—I want to be reconciled to that silly fellow before bedtime; I should be sorry to break his rest; I know that I shall have some trouble to bring him to reason; he will not be half so easily won to pardon as Miss St. Austyn."

"If Gertrude excuses it, I think he cannot refuse," returned Marian.

"He ought not, certainly, but he will resent the affront, particularly as offered to her. Oh! I know it all by heart before we begin. It is ten to one but he puts me into a real passion with his punctilios and nonsense, before we have done."

"I hope not," said Gertrude, smiling; "Marian and myself will be answerable for you in future."

"With such hostages, indeed, I shall not run much danger; but he will scarcely believe that I have been so successful in obtaining my pardon. He has caught me in one lie, and may easily suppose I can tell another."

"My

"My brother, I am convinced, will not dispute your word, sir."

"That is more than you know. I wish you would give me one of your gloves, roses, flounces, or furbelows, for a token; *that* would be undeniable evidence."

"Your word will be far more satisfactory, colonel," said Gertrude.

"I dispute that," replied he; "there is more persuasion in one of your old ribands than in any thing I could urge. Gratify me by the trial—it will ensure me a good reception."

"Pray, my dear Gertrude," said Marian, laughing, "take pity on my poor alarmed uncle, consider his fears, and secure him from reproof."

"Why, really," returned Gertrude, "sooner than he should incur so dreadful a danger, I would do any thing in my power; but as all my furbelows and flounces are fast sewed on, he must for this time fight his own battle; and as he is an

experienced

experienced officer, there can be no doubt of his obtaining the victory."

"Egad, I don't know that! should any ill consequence ensue, remember you are to blame, that would not even give an old shoe to save me."

Marian whispered Gertrude.

"No, indeed," answered the latter in a low voice, "I cannot consent; if you do, remember that I will never replace it."

"I will run the hazard, and trust to your generosity; at least, my motive being humanity to my uncle, I am sure all good people will excuse me."

"What is that, Marian?" said the colonel. "Give me something, that's a dear girl; Miss St. Austyn has proved that she has too much good-nature to bear malice."

"Don't trust to that, colonel," replied Gertrude; "repeated offences may make me obdurate."

"I am resolved to try," answered Marian, untying a plain miniature she wore of

of Gertrude on her neck: "take this, my dear uncle; consider the sacrifice I make and estimate your obligation accordingly. Not that I mean to give it to you; it is simply a loan, to prove that you have obtained your pardon, and from your hands I shall require it."

"Surely you will not part with my miniature?" said Gertrude.

"If I don't reward you for this, Marian," replied the colonel, taking the picture, "say I am a rogue and a coward; not that I think you will ever get it again, but you shall have one drawn from it, and stuck round with diamonds as sparkling as the eyes of the original. Secure now of a gracious reception, excuse me if I bid you farewell for this evening." So saying, shaking each affectionately by the hand, he left them.

"Indeed, Marian," said Gertrude, seriously, "I am now more offended than I have been the whole evening. Had I not already suffered sufficiently, but you must

give

give that foolish picture to your uncle? Your brother will think it my present; which, together with the whole of this night's behaviour, will make him judge me a very forward girl."

"How little, my dear Gertrude, do you know of Albert! Open, generous, and sincere himself, the proof you have given him this evening of your esteem has fixed his heart irrevocably yours. For the picture, had it indeed been your gift, it would have been more precious; but as mine, however acceptable, you have no merit in the presentation."

"Indeed," said Gertrude, "I do not wish to claim any; as slightingly as you have treated my portrait, I dare say you would be offended should I give away yours—for example, suppose to Frederic—I have no doubt it would be an acceptable present."

"That requires consideration, child. To be sure, if I was quite certain that he was as good as we hope, and that I was also quite

quite convinced that he was the sort of creature whose oddities I could bear with, in return for his bearing with mine, I should not much care about it. You will, however, remember one circumstance that makes a material difference—I mean the characters of the men: Frederic is a fine gay fellow, that doubtless has sighed for a thousand women; while, on the contrary, Albert is a tame, domestic animal, reared in a desert, and who never, before he saw you, found out that he had a heart to bestow."

Such was the conversation until supper; Marian's spirits being elated with the prospect of her brother's happiness, and Gertrude's not depressed, when she reflected, that though the colonel's story had interested her sufficiently to make her disclose the secret of her heart, yet that the confession was entrusted to a man of honour and virtue.

CHAPTER VI.

A Bribe—A Reconciliation—And the soothing of a Friend.

On the colonel's arrival at home, his first question was for Albert, who, the servant informed him, was retired to his apartment. —"Tell him that I am returned," replied the colonel, "and should be glad of his company for half an hour."

"Mr. Montgomery is perhaps in bed, sir—he went immediately to his chamber."

"Call him up then, sir, and in future please to remember to say, your master, when you speak of my nephew. If he is asleep, awaken him; tell him the articles of peace are signed, and that I have a sufficient hostage for the enemy's part of the agreement."

The

The servant went immediately to Albert, who had not yet retired to rest, and delivered his message to the best of his ability, though it was as unintelligible to Montgomery as himself. Albert obeyed the summons, though he had by no means recovered from the perturbation the discovery of the evening had occasioned; and entering the parlour, he waited his uncle's commands in silence.

"I hope, sir, you have recovered that calm state of mind, which is so peculiarly your endeavour to exert on all occasions?" said the colonel.

"I am sorry to say I have not, sir," returned Albert. "Had myself or Marian alone been concerned, though it had distressed our feelings, yet as it might have proved our duty, I could have willingly submitted to such a trial. But the liberty taken with Miss St. Austyn was unpardonable; I must undoubtedly appear a party in the deception."

"Pray, sir, was it not entirely your own fault? Would any thing less have convinced you? I knew the goodness of her heart, and trusted implicitly to its dictates."

"I have no right to prescribe to you, sir, and could only have wished that I had not been made the instrument."

"Why, your peace is made, at least mine is, and you are, I suppose, included in the treaty. You fled like a coward in the heat of the battle; I staid and carried off the spoils;" holding up the picture.

Montgomery had more than once wished for this miniature, as he saw it worn by his sister, but had never ventured to express his desire.

"You have indeed been fortunate, sir," said he, "pardon me if I say, in this case beyond your deserts."

"I did not ask your opinion, sir; I am perfectly satisfied with having succeeded, without racking my head with the means. Don't you know that the world in general will never seek into the causes from whence

you

you become rich or fortunate? But if, on the contrary, you are poor and friendless, they will readily discover that it is but the effect of your imprudence, idleness, and folly. Thus, sir, as long as I did not absolutely steal the picture, it is all allowable.—*None but the brave deserve the fair*," (singing).

"Did Miss St. Austyn give it you, sir?" said Albert.

"No, it was your sister's pledge of a general amnesty. Miss St. Austyn's lips said *No*; but her eyes, which are a thousand times more expressive, said *Yes*; and on those occasions, when I was a young fellow, I always consulted the latter."

"I am not so skilful in the language of the eyes," said Albert.

"More fool you then, sir. But, however, I hope all your doubts, surmises, whimsies, and fooleries, are now satisfied, and that you are convinced Gertrude—"

"Is an angel," interrupted Montgomery; "but I cannot flatter myself that either

Mrs. Stanhope or she will entirely excuse this unnecessary trial of her sentiments."

"They will both excuse you, whatever they do with me. You have only been a *cat's-paw* in the business; all the ingenuity and merit of the *baboon* depended upon my part."

"I shall be far from claiming any share of the praise appertaining to it, sir," replied Albert, smiling.

"Yet, sir, you would have no objection to share the prize I have carried off in consequence."

"Why, if it could be obtained with honour, sir, I should consider it desirable."

"Then look you, Albert, I don't much care if I do give it you; but you will remember that it makes you an accomplice: therefore, perhaps you would rather decline it."

"I cannot withstand the offer, sir," replied Montgomery, receiving it from him; "at all events the sin of temptation is yours, mine

mine merely the natural weakness of falling into it."

"We are friends then," said the colonel, holding out his hand.

"Were we ever otherwise, sir?" answered Albert, raising the offered hand to his lips. "The petulance of my conduct I readily allow, but the motive will, I am convinced, excuse me to you. I felt for Miss St. Austyn's wounded delicacy; I had seen the struggles she endured to conquer her timidity, before she could assure me that her esteem would suffer no diminution by my change of fortune. I had heard her sweet voice wishing the sanction of Mrs. Stanhope's presence in such a moment, and had felt the tears of sympathetic tenderness drop on my cheek; and to know that I had wantonly occasioned this, was more than my temper could endure. I would myself have made any sacrifice to have been assured of her sentiments, but I could not endure the reflection of so barbarously tearing them from her."

"Well, I am glad it is over, however," returned the colonel; "for I was not without my stings of compunction. Egad, you had like to have spoiled all at the very onset, talking of your duty and nonsense; but resolved to persevere, I hardened my heart, and went out of the reach of danger. And now let us banish the subject for this evening; a bottle of wine will be very acceptable to me, and I think you will not refuse your part."

On the ensuing morning, breakfast was no sooner concluded than Albert, with a mixture of diffidence and pleasure, hastened to the Vale; where being assured not only of his own pardon, but the colonel's, his satisfaction and gratitude were scarcely to be restrained.

"After the confession of last night, Mr. Montgomery," said Gertrude, blushing, "it would be affectation to attempt to disguise my sentiments, nor do I indeed wish it; but you will oblige me by pursuing this subject

subject no further until the return of Mrs. Stanhope; her approbation must sanction my conduct, before I can be totally reconciled to the step I have taken, however it was the consequence of necessity. Your company, with the colonel, will give us pleasure this afternoon; it is by no means improbable that my aunt may return to-night."

Albert accepted the prohibition with pleasure; he had the rapturous satisfaction of knowing himself beloved, and was content to submit to any restriction Gertrude required. Thus the afternoon passed as cheerfully as possible, in the common round of their usual amusements.

About eight in the evening they had the satisfaction to see Mrs. Stanhope's chaise driving up the avenue; and all equally eager to meet her, were ready for her reception when she alighted. She speedily informed them of the inefficacy of her journey, which threw a cloud over the whole party; but a short observation convinced

her that a very material alteration had taken place with the young people.

"I have much to say to you, madam," said the colonel, "but shall defer it until to-morrow. To confess the truth, I have been a sad dog in your absence, and have not courage to enter upon my trial without preparation; all I can entreat is, as in future I purpose to turn over a *new leaf*, that you will in this case let your justice sleep, and remember only mercy."

"Really, colonel, I fear your case is bad indeed, to need this preliminary."

"Bad enough in all conscience, madam; but as I have obtained the pardon of the parties most immediately concerned, you, I hope, will not be obdurate."

"I unhappily must request to be concerned in the pardon," said Albert, "tho' not an intentional offender, a mere *cat's-paw* in the affair, as my uncle expresses it, and perhaps not inapplicably, for I have smarted severely for his wit."

"At

"At all events, I see that you are resolved to clear yourself; but I shall save you that trouble, by truly owning the whole guilt."

As the gentlemen judged Mrs. Stanhope must be fatigued, they took leave at an early hour, when an open disclosure of all that had passed took place. Mrs. Stanhope soothed the fears of Gertrude with the tenderness of a mother.—"I confess," said she, "that I think the colonel has behaved almost unpardonably; but for yourself, my dear child, could you for a moment suppose that I would blame you for acting according to the dictates of honour and humanity in the favour of a virtuous man, whose whole heart was yours? I am in truth a little displeased with the colonel; but on your account, and Mr. Montgomery's, I cannot be sorry, as I have no doubt the behaviour of both was calculated to render you more estimable to each other And now, my Gertrude, give me leave to con gratulate you on the possession of such a

heart as Mr. Montgomery's. I flatter myself that I shall see you happy; for your affection is not the consequence of a hasty resolution, but of a thorough acquaintance with each other. If I had not entertained the highest opinion of him, I certainly never should have suffered so particular an intimacy to take place; but I considered his character as a son, a brother, and a nephew, in the most advantageous light, and could scarcely entertain a doubt of his being worthy to be entrusted with the happiness of my beloved niece."

Miss St. Austyn's reply was grateful and affectionate.

"You must yet, my dear madam," said she, as she concluded her thanks, "grant me one more favour. The colonel, as you have frequently observed, possesses an excellent heart; healmost idolizes his nephew; and, as I think he has some little esteem for your Gertrude, I must beg you to let me be his intercessor. Will you not join with me, Marian, in this petition?"

"Willingly,"

"Willingly," answered Miss Montgomery; "but my heart is too full to suffer me to be eloquent. I cannot help reflecting on the amazing change that has taken place within two years. I was then friendless and unprotected, my brother in a prison, and myself reduced almost to despair. Behold me now, beloved, honoured, caressed, and surrounded by friends; and to complete my happiness, the best of brothers approved by his revered benefactor, and all but accepted by the woman of his heart. Can I contemplate this, and find words to express my feelings? No, I find it impossible; and that Power who knows every thought can alone properly judge of my gratitude."

"I will have no painful remembrances intrude to-night; we will talk more fully to-morrow: for the present, it is near supper-time; after which, as I am weary, we will retire to rest."

CHAPTER VII.

Letters—Perseverance in Concealment.

The colonel having obtained his pardon, though not without a severe reproof from Mrs. Stanhope, and Albert being an accepted lover, the utmost harmony and satisfaction reigned in both families. The veteran was anxious to complete their union; but Albert was far too considerate to shock the delicacy of Gertrude by pressing her to a hasty determination, though it was evident to all how happy such an event would make him. Both himself and the colonel wrote to Frederic on the occasion, as did also Mrs. Stanhope and Gertrude, all pressing him to join them, except his aunt, who

who declined farther interference on that subject.

The colonel's letter breathed that true spirit of philanthropy, though mingled with humour, that distinguished all his pursuits and actions. He pressed Frederic in the warmest manner to hasten to them; he reminded him, that as they were on the point of becoming relations, it was *his duty* to oblige his new uncle; concluding with a strong asseveration, that if he did not obey the summons, he would ferret him out, if he was in the land of the living, cost him what it would: nor did he fail, in the course of the letter, to inform him of the refusal Willowby had received from his sister, as also of the meeting with sir James Montgomery, and his offer for his son.—"Marian," said he, "has behaved, in this case, like a woman of spirit; her mother had disgraced their noble family, and she was careful not to add to the offence—so perhaps *she* might say; but the plain truth was, according to my opinion, that she did care a *fig's end* for

her

her cousin. Be that however as it may, though I did not interfere, the denial shall be two thousand pounds in her purse whenever she chooses to claim it."

Albert's letter was equally warm and friendly: he entreated the approbation of Frederic to his suit, which he conjured him to sanction by his presence.—"I cannot be happy," said he, "if you are absent; my heart longs to embrace one so dear to my beloved Gertrude; shew that you forget all past disagreeables; and brothers from the happy period I look forward to, let us also be brothers in affection."

At the usual time for receiving answers, letters arrived for each; but as they all expressed the same sentiments, it will only be necessary to give that to Albert.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"Several times did I read over your letter (which I first opened) before I could believe the welcome news it communicated.

municated. To call the man my brother, whom I already sincerely esteem, is a satisfaction I did not expect to enjoy in my exile.

"Would to Heaven I could accept your invitation! But it is impossible; yet let me know the appointed day, and not even yourselves shall more sincerely rejoice.

"Though the letters I am favoured with from all parties are equally pleasing to me, yet I must give the preference for intelligence to those I receive from the colonel; he appears to remember that I am a recluse, and that those minutiæ that you happy lovers cannot condescend to enter upon, are to me the highest gratification. Your letter is *all* Gertrude, hers *all* Montgomery My aunt's is friendly and affectionate, and bespeaks what I have ever found her—ready to palliate the errors of others, though she has none to excuse for herself.

"The colonel tells me, that my sister has refused Mr. Willowby, as Miss Montgomery has also her cousin. Believe me when I say I pity him; the impression such

a woman makes on the heart cannot easily, if ever, be forgotten. Never before have I dared to write her name; but may I not now, from the expected union, be permitted to mention one to whom I may consider myself in some degree of affinity? and though she detests the man, may she not suffer the brother?—But I am wandering far from my promised resolution, and entering on a subject vexatious to you, and painful to myself.

"I see by the public prints that Berners is married. Sincerely is the unhappy wo man who has made such a choice to be pitied. Her fortune, I understand, is considerable: but believe me, with him it will be nothing; for never did I see so infatuated a gamester, and that too without skill.

"Though the invariable uniformity of the life I lead will not permit me to be an entertaining correspondent, yet I will entreat you to write frequently. Remember how interesting every circumstance

respecting

respecting both families is to me, and do not neglect them because they may appear trivial to you, who, surrounded by those you love, can form no estimate of the objects that may contribute towards my satisfaction. The growth of a tree, the blowing of a flower, or the withering of a shrub, are now become material to me, who for merly bestowed scarcely a thought on them. The sun, which for many years I had not contemplated in its glorious rising, is now familiar to me; and by the mild light of the moon I frequently wander for hours, not unpleasantly, my thoughts recurring to the party I most love and honour, and to join whom is the first and dearest wish of my heart. Farewell, my friend! Hasten to entitle me to that dearer name of brother, and believe me,

"Ever sincerely, your
"F. St. Austyn."

As the letters were mutually communicated, they were also mutually canvassed.

"My

"My dear, my obstinate brother," said Gertrude, "how can he suppose that I can think of myself, in the uncertainty I feel respecting his situation? It would embitter my every hour, and," continued she with some hesitation, "I do not choose to enter on so important a change with an April face."

"I will not request it," answered Montgomery, pressing her hand to his lips, "whatever the self-denial may cost me. I will write again to Mr. St. Austyn; I will entreat him to take pity on me in this instance, and pay us a short visit, if he even insists upon returning to his retreat; though, if we could once succeed in getting him among us, I should not be hopeless of detaining him."

"Ay, ay," returned the colonel, "let Marian but once more catch him upon her hook, and he may flounce and flounder as much as he pleases: but it will be all to no purpose; the barbed point will stick too close for him ever to get rid of it again."

"Indeed,

"Indeed, sir," answered Marian, laughing, "I fancy you have a greater opinion of my skill in angling for hearts than I really merit; for though, according to your account, I caught Mr. St. Austyn's *upon my hook*, yet you see I had not the power to bring it safe to shore."

"You saucy gipsy, you never tried; you remembered that he had once attempted to *bite* you, and made him such a return, that, egad! the poor fellow was glad to escape your *fangs;* and even now that he is as tame as a pigeon, he is afraid to venture."

"Really, colonel," said Mrs. Stanhope, "you represent your niece as a very tremendous creature; I much question whether Frederic would subscribe to your opinion."

"Perhaps not, madam; but he is only the more to be pitied, as it proves his understanding rather affected."

As the colonel had promised to dine with a party of the neighbouring gentlemen, he soon after took leave; but Albert

to

to whom no society was so dear as that at the Vale, adroitly excused himself, and with great pleasure accepted Mrs. Stanhope's invitation to pass the afternoon with them.

CHAPTER VIII.

A Chapter of Love.

After dinner, Mrs. Stanhope being withdrawn, Marian, under some pretence, speedily followed; when Albert, seeing Gertrude confused, turned the discourse to their first acquaintance. Seated by her side, her hand locked in his, he said—"How little did I ever expect to be thus blest! For many tedious months did I conceal my sentiments, under the painful supposition that I was not only indifferent, but almost hateful to you."

Gertrude

Gertrude replied with great candour, but some confusion, by declaring the fears she had long experienced in his presence; "though," continued she, timidly, "I now almost believe that my heart deceived me, in return for my endeavouring to teach it a lesson it was resolved not to learn. I too always thought, though you behaved to me with great politeness, that I could discern a dislike, a distance, that convinced me you did not esteem me; and unto that reflection alone you must attribute my conduct."

"How erroneous, how unjust, was that imagination! Oh, Gertrude, you know not how long I have loved you!"

"Nay," said she, interrupting him almost involuntarily, "I dare not ask that question, nor yet hear the avowal."

"And why, my love? Can you doubt my truth?

"No, Montgomery," answered she, blushing; "but it may tell me a secret that it would give me pain to hear."

"Then

"Then shall it never be disclosed.—Yet," continued he, "if you have formed any erroneous judgment respecting me, at least you ought to give me leave to justify myself; I could bear any thing rather than to suffer in your opinion."

"I see my folly has excited your curiosity, and cannot bear you to form an unjust surmise, however it may be painful to myself. My heart, Montgomery, is, I believe, a very foolish, susceptible one," continued she, averting her blushing face; "and to own the truth, I frequently think that it was sooner sensible of your merit than I choose either to avow to myself, or indeed than it ought to have been; for I am convinced you did not then think of me."

"Enchanting Gertrude," exclaimed he, stealing a kiss from her glowing cheek, "the attention of my whole life can alone shew my sense of your sweet confession; but at once to silence all your delicate scruples, hear me make an avowal that will at once destroy

destroy the unjust supposition you have formed. I candidly confess, that when I first saw you, though I allowed you beautiful, my heart felt no emotion; but afterwards, when I discovered your enchanting form was but the repository that contained that invaluable jewel, a tender and benevolent heart, I was no longer master of myself, my whole soul was yours, and nothing but the idea of being displeasing to you could have made me conceal it."

"Ah! Montgomery, are you too turning flatterer? All explanation but the *time* was unnecessary, and I know I am seeking pain to hear that."

"And why," said he gaily, "should you suppose so? The only disagreeable part of the confession is on my side, I can assure you; for it will reduce me to confess myself a *thief*."

"A thief!" repeated Gertrude, smiling; "what have you stolen? Nothing more, I will venture to answer, but the theft that is unpunishable by law—a female heart."

"No,

"No, indeed, and in sober sadness, my crime, though far more innocent, is really punishable, if you choose to be cruel; for I stole—a pocket-handkerchief."

"A pocket-handkerchief!" exclaimed Gertrude, laughing. "Nay, then I fear you are a pickpocket:—but how that has any thing to do with me, I cannot devise."

"Well, then, for an honest confession, in hopes of an unconditional pardon: My heart was free until the day I contemplated you, my sweet Gertrude, with anxious humanity and busy tenderness, chafing the temples, and wringing the water from the hair of poor Betsey Southern. You may remember you afterwards tied it up with your handkerchief; that handkerchief I became possessed of, nor ever have had resolution sufficient to yield the prize."

"Ah! Montgomery," said she with emotion, "teach me to forget that dreadful, that humiliating period of my life, which I never can reflect on without shame and horror!"

"It

"It shall be the study of your Albert's life to obliterate from your memory whatever gives you pain. This silly confession you forced from me by your (shall I not call them?) unjust surmises."

"Ah, Montgomery! but when you heard Betsey's story, what did you then think of me?"

"I did not believe it, my love: but I will not be questioned thus; it is now your part to answer my interrogatories."

"One more question, and I will answer what you please. Did you not despise me when you knew my folly? I know you are above falsehood, Montgomery, and will abide by your reply."

"No, on my life and honour! I will candidly confess I felt severely wounded, and resolved to tear you from my mind; for I considered your heart as engaged beyond retreat, and mine bled for the consequence of such an attachment. My uncle pressed me to address you; I was however master enough of myself to conceal my feel-

ings. He accused me with coldness and insensibility. Ah! could he have seen my heart, how readily would he have allowed his injustice! Love and Gertrude were the directors of its every movement."

Gertrude reclined her head on his shoulder, and a tear dropped on his hand.

"Never more," said he, kissing off the tear, "let the hand of your Albert be so painfully honoured: if you knew how severely he feels your emotion, I am sure you would endeavour to suppress it."

"I will in future. Yet tell me, Albert, how was it possible you could ever forget my folly?"

"If I am not revenged for all those hateful questions," said he, folding his arms around her, "may I be doomed to repeat them! How do you think it is possible to sit by you, and remember such trifles?"

"Nay," said she, "do not leave my heart unsatisfied: how was it possible you could forget?"

"Again, I reply," answered he, clasping her

her to his bosom, "how was it possible I could remember? Did you not treat me with distinguished kindness? In the intervals from my delirium did I not see your tears? Did you not, my lovely girl, in the moment of apprehended danger, fly to the bosom that would willingly have yielded its blood to have saved yours?"

"Ah, Montgomery! that dreadful day, how sincerely did I feel your tenderness!"

"Let us lose the remembrance for ever; I will candidly own that I have scrutinized your every word and action with the vigilance of an inquisitor, and the watchfulness of a Spanish duenna: your heart, my Gertrude, has proved above the test, and never shall mine know another love."

A silence of a few minutes ensued, when Gertrude, withdrawing herself from the encircling arms of Montgomery, said—"I will endeavour to merit your good opinion, however difficult I may find it to regain my own."

"Will you not allow," said he, cheerful-

 ly,

ly, "that I have given a wonderful proof of my patience on this occasion? and surely, in common justice, you ought to proportion the reward to the trial. Can you then, my Gertrude, lay aside your fears, and, with that charming candour that distinguishes you, condescend to fix the period from which your Albert may hope to date his happiness."

"Indeed, indeed, I cannot: you are too encroaching; do you consider how little time has elapsed since you made me the offer of your heart?"

"Perfectly; a long five weeks. Have we not in the time written to your brother, and received his answers? add to which, that I have loved you two tedious years, and every hour now appears to be stolen from our expected happiness."

"Consider, Montgomery, my uncertainty respecting Frederic; though I endeavour to conceal it, it weighs heavy on my heart. Could I but once be ascertained of his situation, I should be more at ease."

"Though

"Though his fortune is undoubtedly contracted, yet he does not appear unhappy," answered Albert. "Like yourself, I ardently wish he would be more communicative; or could I gain any clue to guide me, I would spare no pains to discover his retreat."

"Such a search would be attended both with trouble and fatigue," said she, "and perhaps, after all, might be unavailing."

"Trouble and fatigue would be forgotten, could I contribute towards the happiness of my Gertrude's brother, and particularly with so inspiring a reward in view."

"I have frequently reflected on the subject," said she; "and as it is plain old Jonathan knows where he is situated, I think it would be by no means impossible to gain the secret from him."

"I will tear myself from you to execute this commission; my uncle, I know, will accompany me; your brother, it is evident, esteems him; and could we but be suc-

 cessful

cessful in our pursuit, never would we leave him until he promised to accompany us."

"Your goodness, Montgomery, overpowers me; from my heart accept those thanks which my tongue cannot utter."

"I require so large a gratification that I merit no thanks. If I am successful, you will find me an intruding beggar—if otherwise, you will not surely punish me for my misfortune. I will depart in the course of a day or two: the length of my absence will be uncertain, as, should I discover he is on the Continent, I shall not scruple to pursue him. The time his letters are reaching us, proves it cannot be at any material distance. Then say, my love, on my return may I not claim my reward? That, you know, is fixing no immediate period, but is a sweet hope to sustain my spirits on the journey."

"You will consult Mrs. Stanhope on the subject," said Gertrude, hesitatingly; "my will shall submit to her judgment. Press me," continued she, "no more now; but

let

let us seek my aunt and your sister, and inform them of this new resolution."

Albert kissed her hand, and accompanied her to the library. Gertrude immediately informed her aunt of Montgomery's intention, who, though she did not appear to consider it of any efficacy, expressed her satisfaction at his making the attempt. "Old Jonathan is certainly the only chance," said she, "and we will strengthen your interest there with a letter from myself and Gertrude; but should that fail, all further search is vain."

This subject employed the greater part of the evening, until the colonel was announced, who was no sooner informed of the intended arrangement, than he exclaimed—"By jingo! you have forestalled me in this affair. I have business in London in the course of a week, and meant to spare no pains, though I did not mention it, fearful of inspiring a hope that might be frustrated. I did not wish to take Albert from

 a more

a more pleasurable society, but am by no means dissatisfied to have his company, as, according to the old saying, *two heads may be better than one.*

As the gentlemen needed little preparation, the third day from the time of the settlement was fixed for them to commence their journey; Mrs. Stanhope giving them a letter to old Jonathan, one also in case of their meeting with Frederic, and likewise another to his solicitor in town, desiring him to consider the colonel and Albert as her nephew's best friends, and to give them all the information he could procure.

On the morning of their departure they breakfasted at the Vale—an arrangement that Mrs. Stanhope afterwards condemned herself for permitting, as both Marian and Gertrude were visibly dejected, although ashamed to confess it.

The depression of the young ladies was not lost on the colonel, who, with his usual good humour, exclaimed—"Zooks, don't look so dismal—you are enough to put one

out

out of heart. I feel as I used to do before a battle, where we were sure to come off victors; therefore I think we shall be successful. I have read that, in former times, it was the custom for damsels to equip their knights—I am sorry such a good old fashion is laid down, as a smart lass must be a far more pleasant valet-de-chambre than a clumsy fellow."

"My dear uncle," said Marian, endeavouring to rally her spirits, "why did you not send for me to pull on your boots?"

"Because, hussey, I thought you would do it awkwardly. There is one job, however, I believe I may trust you to perform pretty tolerably—that is, come and give me a kiss, and wish me a good journey." Marian threw her arms around his neck, and saluted him with the affection of a daughter. "Bless you, my dear child!" said he; when seeing Miss St. Austyn advancing to grant him the same favour, he snatched her in his arms, and imprinted a hearty smack on her cheek, exclaiming—

"I am now invulnerable; secured by so potent a charm as the kisses of two beautiful virgins, let Frederic look to himself; for, if I don't *ferret* him out, I never more deserve to be so fortified."

Albert embraced his sister, kissed the hand of Mrs. Stanhope, and tenderly saluted Gertrude, to whom he simply whispered the word *remember;* to which she replied with some emotion—"When I forget this generous act, Montgomery, I must indeed forget myself."

All being prepared, and the chaise waiting, they looked their final adieu, and departed.

CHAP-

CHAPTER IX.

A Debt generously paid—An uncommon Dispute between an Uncle and a Nephew.

THE colonel and his nephew arrived the following day in London, where the veteran allowed himself but a few hours to recover his fatigue, before, with Albert, he went in quest of captain Watson, whom he entreated so warmly to sup with him at his hotel, that he accompanied him thither.

Watson had not been able to refrain his admiration of Albert's conduct on the morning of the duel with Frederic, and, now assured they were friends, was highly pleased to cultivate his acquaintance. The

discourse naturally turned on St. Austyn; but Watson was equally ignorant with themselves of his situation, as he had never been seen in London from the time of his leaving it.—"It is the opinion of his acquaintance," said he, "that he resides somewhere on the Continent; but whether it is so, appears to me uncertain, as I myself have received two letters from him since his departure, with the post-mark of Rippon. But be where he will, he is a noble fellow, and will yet, I am convinced, come forth and retrieve all his former imprudences; while that rascal, who was the occasion of his misfortunes, may sculk about with his *lady*, not daring to shew his face."

"Berners is then really married?" said Albert.

"Undoubtedly, and to his sorrow," answered Watson; "a friend of mine was at the Hague when the marriage took place."

"The newspaper alone announced it to

us,"

us," said Albert. "She was spoken of as not young, but possessed of a large property."

"So it was generally supposed, and Berners, with all his art, has been completely duped. She was for many years Graham's mistress before she was his wife, and managed to ruin him so completely, that at his death there was in reality little of his property left. Accustomed to manœuvre, she put a good face on the matter, gave herself out for a rich widow, and though beyond the bloom of youth, being still showy and rather pleasing, soon attracted admirers. My friend tells me, Berners had also passed himself for a man of fortune; so that it was a mutual deception, for they were very speedily married."

"Diamond cut diamond!" returned the colonel. "*Fine Bones* is at least fitly matched; though hang me if I am not sorry for the woman, for he will play the devil when he finds there is no money!"

"As to that, colonel, you may reserve

your

your pity, for, if report says true, the lady is at least his equal at that game; for she led Graham a miserable life. From the little knowledge I have of Berners, I am convinced that necessity alone could force him upon so desperate a step; the money produced from the sale of his commission could not last long, and the *supposed* rich widow was a fine bait."

"Zounds!" answered the colonel, "he has at last made a fine SPOT of work of it, to encumber himself with an *old trot* without property!"

"A marriage on such principles will doubtless not be thought binding by either party, and each separately seek their fortune," said Albert.

"In that case," answered the colonel, "it will do the woman no great injury; but for *Fine Bones*, marriage will be a confounded drawback on his making his fortune."

The conversation then became universal, and the evening passed cheerfully; captain

Watson,

Watson, as he took leave, promising to pay them a visit in the course of three months.

On the ensuing morning, the colonel, with Albert, waited on Mr. St. Austyn's solicitor, when a serious conversation took place between them.

"I am commissioned," said the veteran, "by Mrs. Stanhope, to pay the encumbrance of the estate. As to the writings, she has no objection to their remaining in your hands, as she considers you a man of honour, if you have any dispute of the propriety of resigning them to her. You will therefore favour me by preparing the party who advanced the money to receive his whole demand this evening, and have a proper discharge drawn for Mr. St. Austyn. Mrs. Stanhope, I think, said it was about six thousand pounds: I shall send my lawyer notice to meet me here."

"Two thousand, sir, have already been paid; four, with the interest, are alone due."

"Zounds!" answered the colonel, "I have

have not common patience to think the fellow should hide himself from his friends for such a paltry sum."

"It is plain, sir," answered the solicitor, "that Mr. St. Austyn's view is to clear the estate, which, considering the short time he had been in possession, and the ready money left by his father, was deeply involved. The latter, I fancy, was all condemned before he came of age; yet a better-principled young man I don't think exists, or he would never have submitted to such restrictions to pay his debts."

The colonel and Albert soon after took leave.—"My dear uncle," said the latter, "you have agreeably surprised me. This manœuvre I think totally your own, and congratulate you on the device, as it must, I think, force St. Austyn to come forward."

"Mrs. Stanhope," answered the colonel, "I am convinced, wished to have done it herself; but a little pique that remains for his former conduct, and some doubts of his present frame of mind continuing, prevented

vented her; for I am certain she values the money as little as I do."

After dinner, the colonel appeared to think the time long until the hour arrived that he had appointed to meet Frederic's lawyer, when, to Albert's great surprise, he said—"I think you may as well remain at home, or dispose of yourself as you please, as I have some particular business, that I can more properly transact in your absence, but which I shall fully inform you of on my return."

Albert, who seldom disputed his uncle's will, immediately acquiesced. The veteran hastened to his appointment; and as there is considerably less trouble in paying a sum of money than in getting one advanced, the business was speedily settled, and the debt cancelled, the colonel giving draughts to the amount, but taking the releases simply in St. Austyn's name.

As both lawyers agreed upon the necessity of Frederic's acquittal to enable his solicitor to resign the writings, they were deposited

in his hands, and proper acknowledgments given on the occasion.

The whole business transacted, the colonel said—"You will now, gentlemen, observe my orders accurately, as the affair I shall next speak upon is the joint concern of Mr. St. Austyn's family and my own, and must be completed between the lawyers of both. My nephew, Mr. Montgomery, who accompanied me this morning, is engaged to Miss St. Austyn; you will therefore draw the marriage writings. Her fortune, which is sixteen thousand pounds, I will have entirely settled upon herself and her heirs, with a jointure, for which you may leave blanks, suitable to the property of my nephew, of whom I must now speak. Mr. Wright, my lawyer, can inform you of nearly the amount of my fortune, having lately made my will, one moiety of which I will have immediately settled upon my nephew without restriction. I shall be ready to sign in the course of a fortnight or three weeks; at which period

riod I expect to return to London, and you will oblige me by having all prepared."

The necessary preliminaries settled, the colonel hastened to his hotel, where he found Albert writing to Gertrude.

"I hope," said he, "you have given no hint of what passed this morning, as it will be quite time enough hereafter."

"Undoubtedly I have not, sir," answered Montgomery. "May I entreat to know if you have completed your business?"

"No, sir; I have neither completed *my* business nor *yours*, but St. Austyn's is entirely finished. There is his release," throwing it on the table.

"I am heartily rejoiced at it," returned Albert, having perused the receipt, and returned it to his uncle; "but I did not know, sir, that *you* had any other business this evening than St. Austyn's, and was far from suspecting that *I* could have any."

The colonel filled a bumper, and drank the family at the Vale; when Montgomery having pledged him, he said—"To tell you the

the truth, I did not want your company this evening; I knew that you would be devilish troublesome, and therefore left you behind. I have ordered the lawyers to draw the marriage settlements, for I suppose they will be wanted on our return."

"My dear uncle, will not Miss St. Austyn think me too presuming to take such a liberty without consulting Mrs. Stanhope?"

"Zounds, you would provoke a saint! I always wondered how she could like you. What the plague, are you afraid of a pretty girl?"

"Yes, sir, of offending her."

"That is impossible. The writings will not be produced until after our return, and being ready will prevent delay. I have ordered the whole of her fortune to be settled upon herself, and blanks left for a jointure suitable to your property."

"Your generosity oppresses me, my dear sir; I have not words to thank you. I know it is necessary that the affluence

Gertrude

Gertrude has ever enjoyed should be secured to her, and sincerely thank you for the consideration; but for myself, let *me*, I conjure you, still be dependent on you. Can you suppose that I consider it either painful or humiliating to look up to you as a father?"

"I don't suppose you do," returned the colonel; "but in this case, Montgomery, my honour and your respectability depend upon the arrangement I have made. The world must not have it in their power to say that Miss St. Austyn has married a dependent nephew, though I suppose they all pretty well guess where my property will centre."

Albert's emotion was not to be suppressed, and covering his face with his spread hands, he remained silent.

"Lookye, Albert, don't be foolish. I knew this would be a disagreeable piece of business, and therefore left you at home, that you might not expose yourself, and put me in a passion. I meant to have done

more,

more, but for the fuss I expected. What the plague difference does it make, whether you receive the money from me, or are independent of me? I am not afraid of your failing in either duty or affection. If you regard me as a father, there is no obligation in the case."

"No obligation, sir!" exclaimed Albert. "Not even my father could shew more tenderness for both Marian and myself than we have experienced from you. Have you not daily been heaping benefits upon us ever since our first happy meeting? and have you not enabled me to gain the woman of my heart? yet to be independent of you appears a stretch of goodness I ought not to accept."

"It shall in this case be as I please," returned the colonel. "How the plague can you tell what change may take place? I may grow childish as I get older, and perhaps fall in love."

"I am willing to run that hazard, sir."

"That's more than I am, though I don't think

think there is much danger. However, be contented with this arrangement, which I am convinced is right. Order supper, and let us go to bed, that we may rise early, and prepare for our journey."

CHAPTER X.

A West Indian.

During the colonel's residence in the West Indies, he had formed an intimacy with a gentleman named Vincent. He was about the age of thirty-six, had never been married, was agreeable in his person and easy in his circumstances, living upon an estate of his own, which, without either cruelty or oppression, produced him a clear five or six hundred pounds yearly.

The second day after the colonel's departure,

ture, this gentleman, who had come to England on some mercantile concerns, arrived at Blackwood, being unwilling to leave the country without seeing him. Mrs. Mosley paid the stranger every attention, and immediately sent word to Mrs. Stanhope, who returned an answer, requesting his company at the Vale—an invitation he did not think proper to decline.

Mrs. Stanhope informed him, that the colonel was then absent with his nephew upon some business very interesting to her, and which they had undertaken solely to oblige her; therefore entreated him to favour them by remaining in the country until his friend's return. Mr. Vincent accepted the invitation for a fortnight. At that period, he observed, he had affairs to transact in London, which when he had completed (should the colonel not return before his departure), he would take another journey to Blackwood, rather than sail for the West Indies without the satisfaction of seeing him.

Though

Though Mr. Vincent passed the day at the Vale, he slept at Blackwood, and breakfasted with Mrs. Mosely; in consequence of which he became acquainted with Miss Southern, whom he took for her daughter. The beauty of her person, and the extreme gentleness of her manners, were formed to please; and the heart of Mr. Vincent, which had withstood until the age of thirty-six all the sparkling black eyes of his own countrywomen, fell in one short fortnight a willing victim to the soft blue ones of Betsey.

The time being nearly elapsed, he was necessitated to return to London; but he had now an attraction superior to the colonel to ensure his return. The evening before his departure, Mrs. Mosely being out when he came from Mrs. Stanhope's, he found Betsey alone, and with delicacy and respect made her an offer of his hand. Miss Southern heard this proposal as most other young women would have done whose hearts were free. She saw before her a

man agreeable in his person, in fortune far above her expectations, and whose character, as the colonel's friend, she could not doubt: yet the cruel remembrance of Berners forced her to decline his offer, but that so gently, that a lover must have possessed less spirit than Vincent who could be so easily repulsed.

"Our acquaintance, I confess," said he, "is short, but to colonel O'Bryen I refer you respecting my morals and character: if they prove satisfactory, and your heart is disengaged, why should you refuse me, my sweet girl?"

"Because," answered she timidly, "I am not indeed, sir, worthy the honour you offer me."

"May I not entreat your permission to apply to your mother?"

Betsey could not refrain her tears. "Alas!" said she, "I have no mother, though my good friend Mrs. Mosely supplies that loss to me."

"As she supplies that loss, we will in this

this case consider her as such," said he; "and I think you shew too much duty not to be guided by her counsel."

"I would die to testify my gratitude to her," answered she. "But indeed, sir, you need not speak on this subject; for I am very unhappy, and I entreat you to think no more of me."

Before he could reply, she hastily left him; and Mrs. Mosely soon after entered, when he informed her of the offer he had made.

"Miss Southern, sir," replied she, "is undoubtedly under my care—I regard her as my child; but the person on whom she most depends is Mrs. Stanhope. I can give no reply without first receiving her opinion."

"It can be no offence to consult her on the subject," said he; "and I will to-morrow take the opportunity before my departure."

Such was the resolution of Mr. Vincent; nor did he fail the next morning to put it

into execution; for, requesting to see Mrs. Stanhope alone, he related what had passed, and entreated her interest with Miss Southern.

"I shall flatter myself with success, madam," said he, "if you condescend to interest yourself for me. I confess our acquaintance is short; but I never before saw the woman with whom I could so ardently wish to pass my days, and the time I have to remain in England will not allow of delay. I own the difference of our ages; but if her heart is free, tenderness and attention may reconcile her to that circumstance; for I am convinced of the goodness of her disposition, by the duty and affection with which she behaves to Mrs. Mosely, whom I in reality took for her mother."

"I will consult her, you may depend," returned Mrs. Stanhope, "but entreat you not to fix your heart on this affair. Betsey is a very estimable young woman; but there is a considerable difference in your situation in life."

"True,

"True, madam; but that her youth and beauty more than conpensate. Yet I must candidly own, the sweetness of her manner, and apparent goodness of her heart, are my most powerful incentives; and if I could not flatter myself with the enthusiasm of a youthful passion, I might perhaps obtain an attention and affection equally estimable."

"You may depend, sir, on my impartiality in this case," replied Mrs. Stanhope. "On your return, you shall not be kept in suspense."

With this promise the lover departed; and the ensuing afternoon Mrs. Stanhope, in the presence only of Mrs. Mosely, informed Miss Southern of the proposal she had received, requesting her opinion on the subject.

"Ah, madam!" said she, "never will I deceive any man; and what man would marry so imprudent a girl?"

"Mr. Vincent is a man of sense, Betsey, and may perhaps allow the difference be-

tween real errors and youthful imprudences. Did I, for example, consider your misfortune in any other point of view, never would I have countenanced you. Answer me with openness—had you never seen Berners, would you have accepted Mr. Vincent's proposals?"

"Mr. Vincent is far my superior, madam."

"That can be no objection, but to a grateful heart would be a fresh claim on the affection. Of his character and morals I have no doubt, having frequently heard the colonel speak highly of him: but I would be far from wishing, in the smallest degree, to influence you. I am perfectly satisfied with your present conduct; and whatever you resolve upon, my friendship shall remain the same. Speak then without fear, and determine for yourself."

Miss Southern's reply expressed no dislike to Mr. Vincent, though, as she very rationally observed, she did not as yet know him sufficiently to have formed any permanent attachment.—"Yet," said she,

"however

"however such an offer may do me honour, it can but make me the more sensible of my former weakness; for," continued she, weeping, "Berners' mistress can never be the wife of so respectable a man as Mr. Vincent."

"Undoubtedly not," answered Mrs. Stanhope, "under any deception. Have you courage to let me make the avowal to him?"

Miss Southern appeared shocked at the question; but after a short reflection she replied—"If you will condescend so far, madam, it will add to my former obligations. Let my shame be my excuse for refusing so advantageous, and permit me to say, not unpleasing an offer."

"If Mr. Vincent finds such a proof of our candour an obstacle to his wishes, let him resign you," answered Mrs. Stanhope: "a continuation of your present conduct will ensure you the friendship of myself and family."

CHAPTER XI.

A Northern Journey.

THE colonel and his nephew travelled post, and on the third day after leaving London reached the manor-house. The great gates were close shut, the courtyard half covered with grass untrodden by visitors, the few domestics, or their friends, using another entrance. Thrice had the colonel's servant rung before the old porter reached the gate, and requested to know their commands. Leaving the chaise, they desired the presence of Jonathan; to whom presenting Mrs. Stanhope's letter, the old man, having perused it three or four times over, with many bows and great respect, led the way to a parlour, and at the colonel's request ordered them supper.

"Lookye,

"Lookye, Mr. Jonathan," said he, "I regard myself at home here, for your master is welcome to consider himself so at my house. Mrs. Stanhope, I suppose, has acquainted you in her letter with our business; and as we know it is in your power to give us the information we desire, I think you will not refuse doing your part."

"Mrs. Stanhope, sir," answered Jonathan, "every body must allow, is one of the best ladies in the world; and if I could obey her, consistent with my duty to my master, I should be happy to do it. I knew her when she was a child—not a servant but what would have gone through fire and water to serve her."

"We shall not require such dangerous proofs of attachment from you, Mr. Jonathan," replied the colonel; "only openly and generously tell us where we can find St. Austyn, and depend upon our gratitude."

"It is my master's orders not to disclose his residence to any one, sir."

"What the plague signify his orders?"

"A servant has no right to dispute them, sir. I wished and begged him almost on my knees not to go, but it was to no purpose; go he would, and it was not for me to hinder him."

"But it is for you to tell us where to find him."

"No indeed, sir, it is not. He wanted me to swear; but I did not like to swear, and so he took my word."

"Well then, good Jonathan, I will ensure you his pardon, and Mrs. Stanhope's friendship, and give you a hundred pounds for your secret."

"Pray, your honour, would you like any body to tamper with your servants' honesty, and offer them a hundred pounds for what you had forbidden them to disclose? I beg pardon, but it is a natural question."

"It undoubtedly is a very just one," replied Albert. "But you must be convinced that your master's happiness is alone

our

our motive: his aunt and sister are impatient to see him."

The colonel spared neither entreaties, promises, nor petulance; but in vain; Jonathan was proof against all; and by no means satisfied with their mission, the gentlemen at length retired to rest.

The next morning they were not more fortunate. Every attention they could require, or that the honour of his master demanded, Jonathan was eager to pay them; but his secret was as safe as though it had been still locked in his own bosom.

"I am at once," said the colonel, "both vexed and pleased with that old fool. We have made a pretty jaunt of it, and now must go home like two blockheads: we have had a ride for our money, to be sure, and that is all we can boast."

"The whole of my hope now rests upon his coming forward, as the debt is paid," replied Albert. "The independence of his spirit forced him into this voluntary exile; and thus obliged against his will, he will

doubtless wish to discharge it in his own way."

"It is of no use to remain here," answered the colonel. "Yet now we are out, and so far on the North road, if it were not keeping you upon tender-hooks, by separating you from Gertrude, I should like to go a little farther."

"I am entirely at your command, sir," said Albert. "I must write an account of our bad success to Miss St. Austyn to-night, and can easily inform her of our intention; but may I entreat to know which way you have a wish to direct the excursion?"

"To confess the truth, Albert, I have long had an inclination to visit the residence of your parents. I was confoundedly sorry when I heard the house was let, as I should have liked now and then to have passed a short time there; it would have appeared a kind of tribute to their memory. When the tenant's time is expired, we will repair, and make what alterations may be necessary;

necessary; for I suppose neither yourself nor Marian would like it to fall to decay."

"My dear uncle, I knew it useless to mention my desires respecting our poor cottage until the time was expired for which it is let, but then I shall be happy to adopt a plan so congenial to my wishes."

"What say you then? Suppose we stretch a point, and pay it a visit? But, egad! if 'tis a miserable place, don't let me go; for I shall hate myself, to think my cruelty reduced my sister to such a dwelling."

"After such a declaration, my dear sir, I by all means would wish you to see it, as it will instantly set your heart at ease in that respect. You will certainly find no grandeur, but every outward requisite to procure content."

"How long, think you, would the jaunt detain us?"

"Not above ten days, sir, if we travel post, and as the weather is fine. You will not, I presume, remain there more than a day or two; during which we may, I am convinced,

vinced, intrude on my friend, Mr. Home."

"Why, that period indeed I should not much heed. But let us lose no time, if we mean to put it into execution; for I long to go home again."

"The horses may be procured in half an hour, and we can reach Edinburgh by to-morrow night."

This business arranged, Albert ordered the chaise. Before their departure, the colonel made another unsuccessful attempt on Jonathan. When bidding him farewell, he said—"Remember, I predict that the time will come when St. Austyn wont thank you for this obstinacy: however, old boy, there are twenty guineas for you and your fellow-servants; it is to drink to the happiness of the first marriage you hear of in the family."

"Ah, sir!" answered Jonathan, "if I did not think some such thing! Then it will be sweet Miss Gertrude's, I dare say, that I am to expect. God bless her, say I, and the man of her choice!"

Albert shook him heartily by the hand; and all being prepared, he departed with the colonel. His spirits were involuntarily oppressed as he advanced towards his native home; a thousand fond remembrances of paternal affection arose in his mind, which neither the possession of wealth, nor the love he bore to Gertrude, could banish. The colonel's depression was yet more apparent, and Albert constrained himself to appear cheerful, lest he should increase it. Not even one day would the veteran remain in Edinburgh, though he had never before been in that city; and on the third from their leaving Yorkshire, they reached the shire of Sutherland. As the colonel, notwithstanding his age, was a good horseman, it was proposed to continue the rest of the way on horseback; and leaving their servant with the baggage at a miserable inn, they next day arrived at Melness. Albert's design was to obtain from his friend Mr. Home some information, respecting the inhabitants of his cottage, before

fore he paid his intended visit there; but Mr. Home and his wife were engaged with a party at some distance, and Albert, though nearly at his native home, found himself far more a stranger than in either London or Dorsetshire. Mr. Home's servant however informed them that his master would return in the evening; and to Montgomery's question respecting his tenant, he was assured that if he did not meet a warm welcome, he would be the first that ever had cause of complaint.

"Nay, mair than a', sir," said the man, "your ane auld maid Barbara keeps house, and will nae be a little pleased to see you returned: troth, the puir wife never talks of either Miss Marian, or yoursel, without greeting. She has been driven to muckle distress since you left the country."

"Poor creature!" replied Albert. "She was settled at Ross when we went to England, and we thought happily, or Marian would have taken care to have assisted her."

"As you say your house is not much

above two miles distant," said the colonel, "suppose we ride there this afternoon: I am by no means tired, and we cannot employ ourselves better."

Albert acquiesced: it was indeed his wish, though he did not choose to propose it.

As they rode forward, the colonel appeared to scrutinize every object with no great degree of satisfaction. The country was wild and dreary, scarcely affording pasture for a few small cattle and poor sheep that grazed upon the surrounding mountains, whose tremendous summits were lost in the heavy clouds that hung around them. Not a word escaped Montgomery; the scenes of his childish happiness, and the sorrows of his riper years, were too present to his memory to allow of speech, until, as they turned the base of one of the mountains to take a lower road, the colonel suddenly stopped his horse, exclaiming—"I will go no further tonight, Albert; I cannot bear it; I never

saw

saw such a confounded savage spot in my life. The man who could suffer his sister to spend her life in such a place, while he was in affluence, deserves to be thrown down the steepest of those hills without mercy!"

"My dear uncle," replied Albert, endeavouring to recall his spirits, "let me now entreat you to proceed; one half-quarter of a mile farther, it is by no means so dreary."

The colonel acquiesced in silence; and at about the distance Montgomery mentioned, they entered a valley that lay between the mountains, and which formed so strong a contrast to the reverse of the hills, that they had advanced but a short way when the colonel said—"Egad, this is something better; thank God, it is not so miserable as I expected."

This observation was just: the valley, sheltered on each side by the lofty mountains, bore a far more cultivated and habitable appearance; the slopes were clothed

with

with firs, and the bottom, in distinct patch-es, covered with oats and barley. A few scattered cottages, whose inhabitants ran to their doors to view strangers of an appearance superior to those they commonly saw, completed the scene.

"Look at these little half-naked ragged rascals," said the colonel, observing with apparent pleasure some children that were playing; "the young dogs leap like their mountain goats, and afford a striking picture of the efficacy of a simple diet, unconfined limbs, and pure air, in the early periods of youth."

A small neat house upon a gentle rise next attracted his attention. It was surrounded with a garden, that evidently shewed that industry and skill had not struggled in vain against nature: trees of different kinds, hardy plants, and some flowers, decorated the front; while the back part, which was plainly discernible from its ascent, was entirely dedicated to the growth of vegetables, arranged with care,

and

and cultivated with a luxuriance almost unequalled in so northern a climate.

The colonel stopped.—"Albert," said he, "may I venture a hope? No, I am too sanguine; that little neat dwelling could not—did not appertain to your father."

Albert turned his head from his uncle to conceal his emotion.—"It was," replied he, "for many years the mansion of peace, now a monument of the instability of human enjoyments."

The veteran made no reply, but followed Montgomery to a gate; when fastening their horses by their bridles to the rails, they advanced towards the house. Albert knocked at the door with his whip, which was soon opened by an old woman, whose good-humoured countenance and cleanly habit at once interested the colonel. At sight of Montgomery, a scream of surprise escaped her; and gazing at him a moment, as if to certify his identity, she flew to him, and clasping his neck, exclaimed—"My best, my dearest bairn! ha' I lived til

see

see ye again? Heaven be praised! but ha' ye nae brought wi' you my ain sweet lassie, Miss Marian?"

"My good Barbara," answered Montgomery, returning her salute, "my sister is well; you will in future, most probably, see her frequently. Is your master at home? Do you think we may intrude for an hour? This gentleman is my uncle—he wishes to see our old dwelling."

"Lord save ye! ye'll be as welcome as the blessed sunshine; there does nae live a better mon than my maister, not e'en yoursel', dearly as I lo' you. Ah! if ye did but ken half the gude he does to a' that need him, ye would snatch him to your bosom, and feel ye had met your counterpart."

"I am rejoiced that you are so comfortably situated, Barbara," replied Albert. "May we entreat you to inform your master of your request? My uncle, I am convinced, must be tired; for we have been on horseback all day."

"My

"My maister is oot, but he winna tarry long; he's only walked to the auld craig; he usually taks his book, and sits there till nea: nightfa', therefore I pray ye enter."

With these words she led the way into a parlour, where every object remained in the places Albert had for many years been accustomed to view them. The arm-chair in which his father used to sit, a fire-screen of his mother's work, the harpsichord on which she frequently played, all struck so forcibly on his heart, that he was for some minutes unable to articulate a word; but raising his eyes, and beholding the colonel's face bathed in tears, he said—"My dear sir, do not let us give way to this unavailing weakness. God, who took from me a dear and affectionate father, has replaced him with yourself; and as you cannot enjoy the society of those who had a yet nearer claim on your heart, let the duty of the son compensate that loss."

"I will conquer it," answered the colonel, wiping away his tears. "I am no longer

longer so unhappy; this spot is far more comfortable than I expected to find it; and I have no doubt, notwithstanding my neglect, that my sister, with such a husband and children, might be happy in it: for I feel I could be so, if accompanied by those most dear to me."

"Happy!" exclaimed Barbara. "Bless ye, sir, this dwelling was heaven upon earth. Twenty years did I serve the bonniest pair that ever graced the warld, and I verily believe, the aulder they grew they lo'ed one another the better."

"Barbara," said the colonel, turning to her, "you shall come to England, and live with your old master's children."

"Heaven bless them, sir!" answered she: "but I am too auld to learn your English fashions; I'd gi' my life for either of the bonny bairns I ha' sae often dandled upon my knee; but the height of a' my wishes would be, never to quit this house while I live."

"We will ensure you that, Barbara," said Albert,

Albert, "when the term for which your master has it is expired. In the meantime, as you do not like to leave the country, we will allow a stipend sufficient for your support."

"I dinna need it, my dear sir; my present master, Mr. Audley, will, I ken right weel, never put me away; and I had rather serve him than live independent. Oh! he is the braest child that ever was born. Nae een that gazes on him but admires him; nae a tongue that speaks of him but blesses him."

"I shall be charmed to cultivate his acquaintance," answered Albert.

"Then," continued Barbara, "he's so humble, and so meek—never shall I forget that morn he engaged me to live wi' him; I was in sare distress; for, when my sister died at Ross, I was left without a friend. At Mr. Home's he saw me by chance, and hearing how long I had served your parents, he said I would suit him, and engaged me. My claiths were a' in tatters, and

and my heart was sarely grieved; but the first he mended wi' new ones, and the last he healed wi' kindness."

"I wonder such a character remains single," answered Albert; "for I understand by my letters from Mr. Home that he is a bachelor; and 'though I have had convincing proof that this spot may be rendered delightful with a pleasant companion, yet I must confess I should now think it dreary without one."

"Why, from morn till even he's a'ways doing; and when sometimes I say that I think he'll be weary, he laughs, and answers that he dare nae trust himsel to be idle; and troth I believe he is right, for he's a'ways melancholy when he's not employed. Luke at the garden, it's the work entirely of his aun and the man's haund; and surely it was in sad condition when he had it first, for it was neglected ever sin your departure, and was overgrown wi' weeds."

The colonel and Albert were admiring the

the regularity and arrangement of the garden, when Barbara suddenly exclaimed—"I hear my master scraping his feet at the front door, an I ken right weel that he'll chide me for not setting meat and drink before ye; but I was too joyfu' to think of victuals. He says, in sic a country as this every house should be an inn; an' gude troth he makes his ane, nae only to sic as ye, but to a' the pure round the place, who never ga' awa empty frae his gate; but I'll rin and tell him ye be here."

Barbara had however delayed the information too long, for at that instant the door opened, and the present owner of the mansion entered; but starting, and recoiling, he exclaimed—"Merciful Heaven! I am betrayed."

"St. Austyn! can I believe my sight?" said Albert, in an ecstasy, clasping him in his arms. "Betrayed! and to whom?—to a brother, a friend, who wanted only this to make his happiness complete."

"I believe, on my soul, that St. Austyn and

and you contrived this between you, on purpose to surprise me," interrupted the colonel. "I confess it's a devilish neat trick; but give me a glass of wine, for it has almost overcome me."

"My dear colonel, though you should not have tampered with the fidelity of my servant," said Frederic, "for from Jonathan I am convinced that you have learnt my residence, yet give me leave to bid you welcome, as also Montgomery," clasping a hand of each.

"The wine, the wine!" said the colonel. "Zounds, do you suppose a man of my years can stand such a fillip on his feelings without a cordial to support them? Even the meeting with Albert had not half the effect."

"My dear sir," replied Frederic, "I never felt the want of wine before; I ought to take shame to aver that I do not keep any."

"It would be a false shame then," answered Albert. "Fetch my uncle, good Barbara, some of the best drink you pos-

cess—I am sure he will be satisfied with it." Barbara obeyed, and speedily returned with two bottles of ale, which placing on the table with glasses, she withdrew.

"Sit down, St. Austyn," said the colonel. "Egad! I tell you plainly that I will not lose sight of you again until you pledge me your honour to have no more concealments."

"Concealment will now be useless. I thought myself secure here; and though I rejoice heartily to see you, yet I am displeased with Jonathan."

"Confound the dog, you need not be angry with him on our account; I give you my honour that not a single word could we get from him, though I offered him a hundred pounds. Our visit here was the mere effect of chance."

Albert corroborated the colonel's assertion.

"I cannot disbelieve you," said Frederic, "though I confess I wished to have been more reconciled to myself before I

saw

saw you. However, as this has happened, I hope you will not eject your tenant, Montgomery?"

"Certainly not," replied Albert. "But if you persist in this obstinacy, and will not join us, I shall exert all my influence with Gertrude, as soon as I have a legal right, to let us pay you a visit; for I am resolved hereafter to claim all the privileges of a brother."

"Montgomery, do not oppress me; the step I adopted was necessary to reconcile me to myself; I wished to try whether it was possible for me to live rationally for three years: why will you endeavour to prevent my putting my plan in execution? One year is elapsed; I am perfectly satisfied with remaining here the ensuing two, at which period my estate will be clear, and I will endeavour to make a better use of it than I have hitherto done."

"We will talk of this business presently," said the colonel. "In the meantime, tell me, St. Austyn, I conjure you, how the plague you came here?"

"Ah! sir, I feared that question. I came here in right of a piece of chicanery, that, however, I declare was well meant."

"Egad! I had a great mind to go back this afternoon; I was far from expecting such luck. But tell us, that's a good lad, how, from being a buck of the first rate, you came to sink into a Scotch mountaineer, amidst the wilds of Strathnavern?"

"You have a right to that information, or indeed any other from me, colonel," said St. Austyn. "Yet I must first stipulate for Montgomery's pardon, as he has been deceived throughout the whole affair."

"As it has had such pleasurable effects, I care not. Take my hand, St. Austyn, and believe me when I say, that I regard this as one of the happiest days of my life."

"Generous Montgomery!" continued he with some hesitation. "I have an awkward story to disclose, yet, lest you may think me perhaps more culpable than I really am, take it without disguise.—The evening

evening after you called on me, in consequence of the affront offered to your sister, you may perhaps recollect that we all met at Mrs. Stanhope's, when you gave us a short account of your misfortunes. Believe me, Montgomery, lost as I was in dissipation and folly, one of my most ardent wishes was to serve you; but as I well knew, that after what had happened, every effort from me would be unavailing, I proposed the army to my aunt, which you declined, saying that you preferred commerce. In the commercial line I had no interest; yet, resolved that your justly-offended pride should not in this case stand you instead, I racked my head half the night to devise the means of rendering you some service unknown, as I regarded it as a kind of palliative for the injury I had attempted. At length your house at Strathnavern struck me. You had said, that from the excommunication no one would engage it; and in the morning hastening to one of the agency offices, I employed them to

transact the business; which they said they could easily effect by means of a friend they had at Aberdeen, a Mr. M'Cleod, and which was accordingly completed in the space of a month. I must here inform you that I had no confident whatever in this business, nor did the parties know me by any other name than that of Audley; in which also I have received my receipt from your friend Home. You are now acquainted how I became possessed of the right of residing here, but which at that time you may be assured that I had no intention of."

"True, St. Austyn," interrupted the colonel; "but you said in one of your letters to me, that your first idea of retirement originated in disgust, but that the meeting with me dispersed it: that declaration has frequently cost me some reflection, and I should be glad you would explain it."

"My dear colonel, I cannot refuse to satisfy you; yet you are probing my follies to the quick."

"Ay,"

"Ay," replied he,, "let us know the extent of the malady, or how should we proportion the cure?"

"Plunged in dissipation," resumed St. Austyn, "I flattered myself that I had surmounted my affection for Miss Montgomery, when I accidentally saw her at the play, and discovered my error. The wound was merely cicatrized, but never healed. She drove me from her when informed of the duel, by saying she would leave the house instantly if I did not quit her; but I was too much interested to go far, and I saw you, colonel, join her and Mrs. Mosely. I know you will laugh at me, but I will bear it philosophically. I thought you her husband, and stung almost to madness, resolved to fly, yet had not the resolution, and even watched you out, when I heard Miss Montgomery's servants called.—Pardon me, colonel; pardon me, Montgomery; I then judged of her by the worthless characters I had mixed with; and I loved, hated, desired, yet

resolved to relinquish her for ever, at the same moment. Such was the effect of this struggle on my health, that I was confined some days; during which I reviewed all my follies, and determined to correct them, or perish in the attempt. To provide for Berners was the preliminary step, and for which, and to discharge my debts, I engaged my estate, resolving to go abroad till it was clear. Employed in these arrangements, I met you; when you forced me to do you justice, and opened my eyes respecting the injury I had done Miss Montgomery. My resolution was however taken, though the affair with Berners, whose villainy I discovered through Betsey Southern, hastened my departure some days. During my stay in Yorkshire to learn the event of his wound, the whim seized me to visit Edinburgh, from whence I resolved to proceed to the Highlands, where I was so delighted with your little cot, that I determined to travel no farther, concluding I should be more securely concealed

cealed here than even on the Continent. I therefore returned to Yorkshire, made my arrangements with Jonathan, who receives my letters from the post-house, and speedily settled here, with only my man and Barbara, whose recommendation was having lived with you."

"Though I should not have been entirely satisfied with my tenant," returned Albert, "at the time you became such, yet now I heartily congratulate myself on the acquisition."

"Harkye, St. Austyn," said the colonel, "as I don't intend to move to-night, if possible, can you manage to lodge us?"

"Undoubtedly, as Mr. Montgomery can testify. I fancy he will find every thing much as he left it; Barbara wished it to remain so, and I had no inclination to change it."

Frederic then accompanied them through the different apartments, whose neatness and simplicity were their only ornament, until, in a small bedchamber, seeing a hat,

Albert said—"Who sleeps here? This was Marian's chamber."

"I use this apartment," replied Frederic.

"I wonder at that," returned he; "many of the others are more commodious. My sister preferred it from its vicinity to my mother, that she might be ready in case either of our parents should want any attendance."

"And Frederic prefers it because Marian had preferred it," said the colonel. "Come, be honest, and confess the truth; is it not so?"

"Perhaps it may," answered St. Austyn: "as I had but few gratifications, it was natural I should seize all in my power."

They next walked over the grounds, where Montgomery was both astonished and delighted at many little improvements he saw, until Barbara came to call them to supper, where the colonel found plenty of wine, St. Austyn having sent his servant to Melness for that purpose while they were engaged in viewing the grounds.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XII.

A Journey to London—Arrangements.

AT an early hour the party met at breakfast. The sentiment of sorrow that both the colonel and Albert had experienced on entering the house was greatly mitigated by the surprise of meeting with Frederic, to whom the colonel said in the course of the morning—"Well, St. Austyn, when are we to be off? Albert here is, I know, wishing us both hanged for keeping him so long from Gertrude. What say you to the day after to-morrow?"

"Surely," answered Frederic, "I am not to lose you so soon. Before your arrival, I was satisfied; now I fear you have taught me to want society."

"Lose us! No, that you shall not; I wont stir an inch without you. All are prepared to receive you with open arms, and you shall either go with us, or I will stay with you; and that would be a devilish mortifying stroke to me, who intend to be at Montgomery's wedding."

"Pleased as I should be in any other circumstances with your company," answered Frederic, "this would distress me beyond measure; neither press me, I entreat you, to break a resolution I have formed, which, I repeat, is to remain here until my estate is free."

"You are an obstinate fellow, and must have your own way; but will you pledge me your honour, that, as soon as you receive your acquittal from the man who has your mortgage, or whatever it is, you will come to Blackwood?"

"By my honour and life, I will! My follies by that time may be somewhat forgotten."

"Zooks! they are all forgotten long ago; and

and as I regard you as a man whose word is to be taken, I desire you to know me for one who never puts off till to-morrow what may be done to-day. Therefore, St. Austyn, you are fairly taken in: there is your receipt; your debt is discharged, and you must and shall accompany us home."

St. Austyn's eyes glanced over the acquittal; but for some minutes he was too much affected to reply. At length he said—"Colonel, you torture me; would to Heaven I could hide myself, not only from you, but from my own reflections! To have merited nothing, but detestation and contempt from your family, and to have affection, generosity, and even paternal kindness, forced upon me, is more than nature can support with equanimity."

"What a fuss you make about nothing! Have I taken any pains about you that you would not return? Egad! if I imagined so, I would never bestow another thought upon you."

"My dear St. Austyn," said Albert, "rise

above

above this weakness. Are we not friends—let me say brothers? and if you allow those titles, the word obligation cannot—shall not subsist between us."

"Though as yet I cannot sufficiently collect my thoughts to devise or inquire how this business has been effected, yet give me leave to place it totally to your account, colonel."

The veteran bowed.—"Sir," replied he, "you do my ingenuity no more than justice. I am a skilful engineer, and what cannot frequently be effected by open force, may be performed by a little, well-applied craft. For example, there was no making you act as you ought by either entreaty or reason, therefore you forced me to manœuvre; and if there is any fault in the case, it remains with you."

"At least, colonel," returned Frederic, "reconcile me to myself in one instance, or I cannot answer for my senses. Say that you will take my estate into your own hands till the whole is clear."

"Well,

"Well, well, I'll take that, and you too, into my hands; and if I don't bring you to your senses, never trust me again."

"Believe me, St. Austyn, if you mean to cultivate an acquaintance with my uncle, you must learn to bear his manœuvres, as he terms them. I have smarted pretty severely some short time since from their effect."

"What, the *cat's-paw* business?" answered the colonel. "That was really one of my best strokes; many men have been knighted for less dexterity; and as we are on the subject, I will relate it to you, St. Austyn." The colonel, by his humour in detailing the story of his having deceived Albert in respect to his loss of fortune, succeeded in forcing Frederic into a more lively temper; and in the course of the day, having acquiesced with him in all his arrangements respecting payment, they mutually agreed to depart, as soon as Albert should have visited his friend, Mr. Home.

They accordingly rode to Melness the

same

same evening, when Albert gave Mr. Home what information he thought necessary, representing Frederic's character in the brightest point of view; and which was readily admitted, as his conduct had been so exemplary, since he had resided in that country, as to make him universally approved. Mr. Home would willingly have detained them a few days; but that the colonel assured him was impossible, as Albert was going post-haste to the land of matrimony, which he hoped to reach in the course of a month.—"You must know," continued he, "that I have suffered so many inconveniences myself from remaining a bachelor, that I am resolved to get all the young fellows married, if possible. For example, Frederic here, if he could like Marian, I think it would be no bad scheme; but I fancy she wont suit his taste; he is devilish difficult," winking slyly.

"He must be difficult indeed, sir," returned Mr. Home, "if that be the case. Miss Montgomery was called the flower of

our

our country, and truly I think one of the fairest that ever expanded amidst the bleak wilds of Strathnavern."

"You do not properly appreciate the worth of your niece, colonel," said St. Austyn. "I scarcely hold it possible to find a man that could refuse her: the only difficulty appears a concurrence on her side."

"Marian," returned Albert, "will not, I believe, *unsought be won*; yet coquetry and prudery are equally distant from her character. I am convinced she will hold no man in suspense respecting her resolution."

"Though suspense is almost insufferable, yet certainty is frequently more dreadful," answered St. Austyn, with a sigh.

"I do not think so," returned Albert. "Hope may sustain the first; but, that sentiment extinct, the powers of reason and reflection will enable us to bear with fortitude what cannot be surmounted."

"True," replied the colonel, "'tis all very smooth in theory; but why the plague

did

did you not give us a specimen of the practice when you were apprehensive of losing Miss St. Austyn?"

Having passed the evening with Mr. Home until a late hour, they took their leave, desiring their respects to his lady, who was not returned from her visit; the colonel observing, that he hoped to present her two or three female companions when he next came to the Highlands.

On the following morning, the colonel and his young friends quitted Strathnavern, leaving the house in the care of Barbara, and, attended only by Frederic's servant, proceeded until they reached the inn where they had left their own domestic; from whence, obtaining a relay of horses, they travelled pleasantly, the colonel declaring he felt no fatigue; though the caution of Albert frequently met reproof, as it prevented him making his daily journeys as long as he could have wished.

On their arrival at Rippon they reposed one day, during which the colonel amused himself

himself with reminding Jonathan of his obstinacy; and seeing Albert writing to Gertrude, he insisted that nothing should be said of their meeting with Frederic.

"If I am not to mention our visit to the Highlands, sir," answered Albert, "how will you account for the time we have been absent?"

"That I would have you tell them by all means," returned he; "but there is no necessity of informing them that we found our lost sheep there. Lookye, Albert, I take the whole arrangement of this business into my own hands, and desire you would not interfere." Montgomery acquiesced, and the following morning, at an early hour, in a post-coach they continued their way to London; which having reached on the second afternoon, the colonel, who appeared indefatigable, accompanied by Albert and Frederic, hastened to his solicitor's; but in the way there, addressing them, he said—"If you please, young men, observe me minutely. Do

not

not either of you make fools of yourselves before the persons where we are going. For you, St. Austyn, take your writings without demur; remember, it is your *aunt* that has settled your affairs—I am simply an agent in the business. For you, Montgomery, in the arrangement I will have completed this night, behave as you ought—no nonsense, nor qualms, I insist. Egad, you give me more trouble in getting rid of my money than I had in obtaining it! I inherited it from my father, he from his uncle, and you will possess it from me; now which of the three do you think will have the greatest enjoyment in the disposal?—Undoubtedly myself, as in all probability I shall see how my heir spends it."

This command strongly enforced, the young men, though scarcely able to restrain the sentiment his conduct gave rise to, behaved with a sufficient composure to give him tolerable satisfaction; though he humorously observed, as they returned, that the muscles of both their faces were

screwed up, as though they had smelt a dose of physic under their noses.

Resolved not to suffer them to enter into any explanation that evening, in their way to their hotel he called for captain Watson, who being at home, gladly attended them, as he was delighted to see Frederic, whom the colonel, in general terms, gave him to understand they had found at his seat in Yorkshire.

In the course of the night, captain Watson informed them, he had learned, a day or two before, that Berners and his new-married lady were separated, after some dreadful behaviour on both sides; that she was gone to Venice, and Berners to Portugal.

This news furnished conversation for some time, and after a cheerful evening Watson left them; when Montgomery, for the first time, informed Frederic of Berners' attempt, and the wound Gertrude had received—a relation that, if possible, increased St. Austyn's detestation of the

villain

villain that he had so long cherished in his bosom.

"And now," said Frederic, "before I go to rest, my dear colonel, let me insist you take possession of these writings, which in that case I shall be pleased to have in your hands: every arrangement that I think necessary for your security and my own credit I will have executed afterwards."

"Arrange your own silly brain," answered the colonel. "What the plague, don't you think my head has been sufficiently addled to-night already with the jargon of *moreover*, *nevertheless*, and *notwithstanding*, but you must want to distract it further? No, no, St. Austyn—I will transact no business until I return to Blackwood, and recover my spirits."

"Pardon me, sir," answered Frederic, "if I inquire what time you imagine may be necessary to effect such an event?"

"How the plague should I know? A month or two, perhaps, if you let me alone; but if you *wherret* me, I can fix no period."

"Dear

"Dear St. Austyn, let me entreat you to leave this affair totally to my uncle's management; I am convinced that he will settle it to the honour of both parties."

"I acquiesce," answered St. Austyn; "but remember, colonel, that though I owe you obligations that years of attention and respect cannot repay, yet I will not be humiliated in my own opinion by pecuniary ones."

"Well, well, I repeat, we will settle all at Blackwood; for the present, let us retire to rest, that we may rise early; and believe me, St. Austyn, when I assure you that your own father did not more sincerely wish your happiness than myself." Frederic pressed the colonel's offered hand between both his, hastily shook that of Montgomery, and, with a look that expressed what his tongue could not utter, left them for the night.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Meeting.

Early the next morning they departed for Dorsetshire, and on the afternoon of the following day reached an inn about two miles distant from the Vale; from whence the colonel requested St. Austyn to proceed to Blackwood, while, with Albert, he prepared his aunt to receive him. Montgomery requested to accompany Frederic; but that both himself and the colonel objected to; and one taking the road to the Vale, and the other to Blackwood, they separated; the colonel having sent his servant before Frederic, lest there should be any omission in his reception.

On St. Austyn's arrival at Blackwood, the

the servant shewed him into an apartment, and requested his commands; but on his answering that he had none, left him to his own reflections. Oppressed with the weight of his obligations to the colonel, and distracted with the consideration that in the reduced state of his fortune, it would be the height of meanness to think of Marian, whom he had insulted in her poverty, he was more than once half-resolved to fly from a meeting that he felt he had not courage to encounter.

The colonel and his nephew in the mean-time reached the Vale, where they were received with pleasure, though their unsuccessful journey, as the ladies thought it, was a drawback on their happiness. Gertrude particularly felt herself almost displeased at the cheerfulness that marked Montgomery's features.—"At least," said she, mentally, "he might have appeared sorry that he could not discover my brother; for though I may be flattered by his satisfaction to see me, yet my heart would

have owed him a grateful tribute for his feeling for Frederic."

After some discourse with the colonel on Jonathan's secrecy, in which however Montgomery bore no part, Mrs. Stanhope said—"Your letter informed me that you had paid a visit to your little estate in the Highlands; I hope you found all there to your satisfaction?"

"Perfectly," replied the colonel. "Oh! I was charmed with it, as well as with its present possessor, Mr. Audley; he is as fine a young fellow as ever I saw in my life, and, unless all the country round are liars, as good as he is handsome."

"I am glad of it with all my heart," replied Marian, warmly; "our poor cot was ever the seat of peace and virtue, may it long continue so! My brother told me that the gentleman was a bachelor; in which case, I think, in so lonely a dwelling, he must be in want of a companion."

"He is unmarried," answered the colonel, "but that's no inconvenience; a woman

man resides with him, to whom he seems much attached, and who is uncommonly fond of him."

"A relation, perhaps?" said Marian.

"No, there is no consanguinity between them. He saw her by chance, was pleased with her, and persuaded her to come and live with him. I dare say he will take care of her as long as she lives."

"I suppose he ought to do so," said Marian, colouring. "I am sorry such a character resides in my dear parents' house. How could you say, sir, such a man was good?"

"Why, do you know any thing derogatory to his virtue?" asked the colonel.

"It is impossible I should, sir; but did not you intimate some such thing?"

"Certainly not; the fault was entirely in your misconstruction of my words. Fie, Marian! I did not think you could form such improper ideas."

"Indeed, colonel," said Mrs. Stanhope, "your humour carries you too far. Why

 would

would you voluntarily confuse Miss Montgomery?"

"Only to teach her, madam, not to be so hasty in her judgment hereafter. Come, come," said he, tapping Marian's cheek, "I will set your heart at rest respecting your tenant: he *keeps* your old maid Barbara; don't you think his virtue is very secure?"

"I don't care for his virtue," answered Marian, half laughing.

"But I desire you would care for his virtue; and to cut short all metaphor, I must tell you that he behaved so well to both Albert and myself, and has made so many improvements on the grounds, that we could not do less than entreat him to accompany us home, though we had some difficulty in persuading him to acquiesce. He is now at Blackwood, as I would not take the liberty to introduce him without your permission, madam."

"Indeed, colonel, you are as much too ceremonious in some cases, as in others you

you allow yourself too great a latitude. Need I say we should be happy to see any friend of yours?"

"In that case, madam," answered he, "I will get Albert to ride over and accompany him hither. I am sure you will be pleased with him; and for Marian there, if she could like him, I should be glad to see it a match."

"Really, colonel," said Mrs. Stanhope, "I think that declaration far too hasty; your acquaintance is too short to form a proper judgment either of his virtues or his errors."

"True, madam; but I am convinced that in this case I am right, and I hope, when you see him, you will coincide with me. But, Albert, why don't you set off? I long to introduce our friend to Mrs. Stanhope. Miss St. Austyn will, I hope, excuse the conclusion of that interesting anecdote that you were whispering to her until your return."

Montgomery immediately left them,

 when

when the colonel said to Mrs. Stanhope—"May I intrude, madam, for a few minutes on your private ear? I consulted some gentlemen of the law when in town, and wish to have your opinion on the business."

Marian and Gertrude instantly arose and left the apartment; indeed the latter was rejoiced to make her escape, as she dreaded lest the colonel's consultation should be respecting herself.

They were no sooner gone than the veteran related the whole affair to Mrs. Stanhope, concealing only his having discharged her nephew's debt; representing his conduct for more than a year past as irreproachable, and animating his account with traits of goodness, and proofs of rectitude, that he knew could not fail to interest her. Mrs. Stanhope heard him in the manner he wished; she declared herself pleased with the account he gave of Frederic, and willing to overlook his past follies.

"But

"But why," said she, "colonel, have you kept my poor girls in suspense? Gertrude will be delighted to see her brother, and Miss Montgomery will, I hope, endeavour to forget his offence for my sake."

"Egad, madam, I hope she will forget it for his own; the poor fellow loves her to distraction, though I am convinced that he will not now have the courage to tell her so."

"In that case," answered Mrs. Stanhope, "I cannot pity him; he merits all he has suffered. But come, colonel, I long to impart my news to my young friends; I shall never be able to requite the trouble you have taken on this runaway's account."

"Oh, madam! you will requite me doubly by letting me catch Miss St. Austyn and Marian by surprise. I would not take the liberty with you; but for them, they will excuse it in an instant."

"Colonel," answered Mrs. Stanhope, "I thought you had promised never more to offend that way."

"True, madam, not to distress them, nor will I. But this event will have a contrary effect, and I conjure you, gratify me."

"Take your own way, sir; I see you are incorrigible," answered she, ringing the bell, and desiring the servant to request the company of Miss St. Austyn and Marian.

They immediately obeyed, when some general conversation took place, until, hearing a carriage, the colonel said—"Here comes Albert with Mr. Audley. Now Marian is your time; put on all your airs and graces, take a sure aim, and kill him at once."

"Not I indeed, sir," answered Marian; "it would only be shooting at random; and should it hit, I might perhaps not think the game worth carrying off the field."

"Why, you little *wit-snapper*, if you turn up your nose at him, I wish you may die an old maid. But excuse me a moment, I'll run and receive him." With these

these words the veteran left them, but speedily returned, leading Frederic.

"Permit me, madam," said he, advancing to Mrs. Stanhope, "to present one whose heart, however his head may have erred, has, I trust, ever been right."

"My brother! my dear Frederic!" exclaimed Gertrude, interrupting the colonel, and clasping her arms round St. Austyn, "do I indeed embrace you? Oh, madam!" continued she, drawing Frederic nearer to Mrs. Stanhope, and bending her knee before her, an attitude in which Frederic joined, "receive my brother—you forgave all my errors; will you not be equally kind to him? Speak, my more than parent, and bless your kneeling children!"

Mrs. Stanhope, thus addressed, for a minute was unable to reply; but bending forward, she embraced both, saying, as she recovered from her emotion—"A blessing more powerful than mine be upon you! May you be virtuous and happy!"

All were for a short time too much lost

in the satisfaction they experienced, to perceive that the colonel with his nephew and niece had left the room.

"Oh, madam!" at length said St. Austyn, "is it possible that you can thus receive one, who, in direct opposition to his own judgment, spurned at your counsel, and preferred relinquishing all correspondence with you, for the society of the vilest wretch that ever disgraced human nature? I deserve reproof—I can bear it; but this excess of mildness overpowers and unmans me. I feel that to hope for your pardon is a stretch of goodness I ought never to expect, unless the past could be obliterated both from your memory and mine."

"My dear aunt will obliterate it from hers," answered Gertrude, warmly. "No one here will remember your errors; for have they not forgotten mine? Oh, Frederic, have I deserved to be beloved by such a man as Montgomery?" Frederic kissed her cheek without reply.

"My

"My dear Gertrude, compose yourself," said Mrs. Stanhope; "rise and seat yourselves by me; our Frederic will, I trust, hereafter be all we wish. The present happy hour shall not be embittered with painful recapitulations of the past."

"Oh, madam!" answered Frederic, "from what a hateful dream I appeared awakened! Under what an infatuation must I have laboured, when I abused your goodness! Yet I was ever sensible of your rectitude and my own unworthiness; for, even that dreadful night, while I was meditating the death of Montgomery or myself, I could not endure, should I fall (which I can truly say I almost wished), that you should think me more vile than I in reality was. To you therefore, madam, in a letter, to be sent in case of my death, I expressed the just sense I entertained of my follies; and in one which I enclosed to Miss Montgomery, I made all the expiation in my power."

"Oh,

"Oh, Frederic! how could you be so cruel?" said Gertrude. "Merciful Heaven! if either of you had fallen, how wretched must I have been! Yet why do I accuse you of cruelty, when I once almost hated him myself? How changed is now my heart, when before my aunt and you I dare avow that he is dear to me as yourselves! Ah, Frederic! if you love virtue, you must love Montgomery."

"I esteem him above all men, his uncle excepted, to whom my obligations are so unlimited, that I can neither express nor repay them," answered St. Austyn.

"They indeed both merit your warmest gratitude," returned Mrs. Stanhope; "they have been indefatigable, not only in their endeavours to restore you to happiness, but also to restore to me a nephew whom I ever wished to esteem. But come," continued she, "let us collect our spirits, and join them; they are deserving all our confidence and friendship."

"I will

"I will call them myself," said Gertrude. "Ah, little did I expect this morning to be so happy!"

Gertrude hastened immediately to the library.—"My dear friends," said she, smiling through her tears, "come and share our satisfaction. I can never sufficiently repay this obligation. I yet am angry with Albert; how could he keep me in suspense?"

"His pardon, my dear Gertrude, will be obtained, when you learn that he was an involuntary offender," returned Montgomery, kissing her hand. "You know not what in this case it has cost me to obey my uncle, nor what numberless nods, winks, and shrugs, it has cost him to keep me in order."

"I must then transfer my anger to you, colonel," said Gertrude.

"I am old, and unable to bear it," returned he. "You may remember, that it was some trouble to me the last time I

had

had the honour of kneeling at your feet for pardon."

"True, colonel; and as my obligations to you in respect to Frederic far exceed the offence, I dare not complain. I am as yet too happy to have time to ask how this meeting was effected. Will you not, Marian, congratulate me upon regaining my brother?"

"Sincerely. But do you not think that I had better remain here than join the party to-night? The meeting will be unpleasant both for Mr. St. Austyn and myself," answered Marian.

"Then the sooner it is over the better," replied the colonel: "Don't throw a damp on the poor fellow's happy reconciliation with his aunt by your frowns. This night must be given to pleasure; let 'forget and forgive' be your motto."

The veteran led the way to the parlour; when shaking St. Austyn heartily by the hand, he said—"Thank God! this business

is

is over. You have been an obstinate fellow; but, according to the old saying, *all's well that ends well.*"

"My dear Frederic," said Albert, embracing him, "how happy has this night made all our friends! How could you so long delay our satisfaction?"

Marian, during their congratulations, had seated herself near Mrs. Stanhope, not unobserved by Frederic, who had but a slight glimpse of her when he first entered. He had however not sufficient courage to address her, until the colonel, taking his hand, and leading him towards her, said—"Marian, my dear, will you not join your congratulations on Mr. St. Austyn's return?"

"I am happy, sir," replied she, with some hesitation, "in a circumstance that confers such satisfaction on all those I love best."

"Well then," resumed the colonel, "give him your hand in token of friendship."

Marian

Marian held out her hand, which St. Austyn received on his knee, and raised respectfully to his lips.

"Accept," said he, "this public testimonial of my contrition. You cannot think more heinously of my past conduct than I do. I feel it is never to be forgiven."

"I have long since, sir, endeavoured to consider it as a lapse of youth, and as arising from a want of a further acquaintance, and shall be happy to number you among my friends."

"Sacred be the title!" returned he; "I cannot aspire to more. I have," added he, rising and relinquishing her hand, "been the architect of my own misery, and will bear it without a murmur."

"You must now, my good colonel," said Mrs. Stanhope, "relieve us by a faithful account of your journey. I am convinced that we are all anxious, and such a narrative will enliven our spirits."

The colonel obeyed, and by his humour

banished

banished many unpleasant reflections, until at a late hour the gentlemen took leave, and returned to Blackwood.

CHAPTER XIV.

Generosity—An importunate Lover.

Early the next day Mrs. Stanhope sent to request St. Austyn to call upon her in the course of the morning; he immediately obeyed the summons; when being alone with him, she desired him candidly to open the whole state of his affairs, that she might at least reinstate him in the property he enjoyed from his father. St. Austyn's feelings were for some moments too great for utterance; at length he said—"I have found the small stipend I enjoy more than equal to my wants, madam, and almost fear affluence:

fluence: the only person for whose sake I could wish to possess it is lost to me for ever."

"The man who fears himself, St. Austyn, is, in my opinion, rather to be trusted than one who has more confidence in his own strength. Act according to the specimen you have given, and not only such a sum as may be necessary to reinstate your affairs, but to any amount within the compass of my fortune, in the cause of honour and virtue, you may claim."

Frederic's answer was not eloquent; gratitude, and shame for having offended such a friendship, mingled with the self-humiliation that an upright mind must ever feel from having deviated from the right course, struggled in his bosom, and stifled thanks. —"Speak, Frederic," continued she, observing his emotion, "let me serve you effectually; your difficulties on the estate I know; if there are any other, mention them freely."

"I had no other, madam," answered he; "and

"and do you not know that the colonel has removed them? an obligation beyond all others distressing, because I cannot force him to arrange the method of repaying him."

Mrs. Stanhope inquired, and was soon informed of all St. Austyn knew of the affair, and which she observed that she would herself insist on settling.—"You surely," said she, "need not be averse to receiving such a present from me, if you consider me in the light I could wish; and four thousand pounds I shall think well laid out, if it will contribute towards your happiness. I need not tell you that my fortune is entirely at my own disposal, and, as Mr. Stanhope has no relations, will centre in my own family, if they merit to be entrusted with it; you will therefore only consider it as receiving a portion beforehand of what rectitude will entitle you to in future."

"Long may it remain in the possession of one who renders it a blessing to all around her!" replied Frederic with warmth; "the acquisition

acquisition of wealth can never compensate for the loss of such a friend."

The answer of Mrs. Stanhope increased Frederic's veneration and respect for her character, and the conversation terminated to the satisfaction of both; Frederic agreeing to be entirely guided by her in his future arrangements.

Marian and Gertrude soon after joined them, but the restraint between the former and Frederic was not to be so speedily overcome as Gertrude could have wished. Marian was uncommonly serious; and Frederic, though he was studious to appear calm, shewed, by his attention to her every action, that her power over his heart was as unlimited as ever.

Albert, with the colonel, joined them at dinner; after which, Mrs. Stanhope informed them of the offer that she had received from Mr. Vincent for Miss Southern; and that in consequence she had written to him, since his departure for London, an account of her former misfortune. They all expressed

pressed the pleasure this information gave them, the colonel speaking highly of Mr. Vincent, from whom Mrs. Stanhope informed them she daily expected a reply to her letter, or a visit.

Albert proposed adjourning to the music parlour, which Mrs. Stanhope seconded, though, she observed, she had some previous business with the colonel. Gertrude taking her brother's hand, led the way, and seating herself at the instrument, soon convinced him of her improvement since her residence at the Vale. In every respect, so great an alteration had taken place, not only in her person, but accomplishments and manners, that he viewed it with admiration.

They had amused themselves some time, when the servant informed St. Austyn that Mrs. Stanhope and the colonel desired his presence in the library.

Frederic obeyed the summons, when Albert, after some conversation, said—"My beloved Gertrude, will you forgive me, if

I remind

I remind you of a circumstance you appear to have forgotten? Was there not a gratuity I was to expect? It is a debt of honour, and ought to be paid."

"I think I can guess the forfeiture," said Marian; "and if not discharged with a good grace, Albert, I would advise you to put it to the vote; you are sure of a strong majority."

"Observe, Marian," said Gertrude, "I regard that answer as an open declaration of war; and take the consequence."

"No," said Albert, "I decline all interference; there is but one vote that shall decide my fate, though I must candidly allow how greatly a speedy payment would enhance the obligation."

"I see," returned Gertrude, "that I am before two partial pleaders, and shall be on my guard: the only difference is, that one openly avows her intention, while the other, more artful, endeavours to undermine my resolution."

"Do you remember," replied he, "that

a month

a month has elapsed since we departed for Yorkshire, and may I not claim——"

"Marian has not forgiven my brother," interrupted Gertrude.

"Was that circumstance included in the treaty, you little chicaner?" answered Montgomery.

"That I cannot absolutely affirm," replied she; "but I insist on making it a preliminary."

"What say you to this, Marian?" asked Montgomery.

"Why, that I neither can nor will be included; though I have, on my honour, entirely forgiven Mr. St. Austyn, and am grieved to see that he is not so cheerful as a reconciliation with his family ought to make him."

"Ah, Marian, there is *somebody* whose smile could make him cheerful in a moment."

"Well then," answered she gaily, "if you mean me, I will go and try its efficacy, and let you know the result of the charm

in a quarter of an hour." So saying, she ran out of the apartment.

"Tell me, Montgomery," said Gertrude, after a short pause, "do you not think my dear Frederic might now be entrusted with Marian's happiness?"

"I do. I am convinced that she is very dear to him, from many observations I have made. But tell me, my sweet Gertrude, for I am convinced that you are more acquainted with her sentiments in this case than myself, are there any hopes of his success?"

"Really," answered she, "I do not know; but supposing I did, I should not consider myself at liberty to disclose them to either you or my brother."

"I do not ask it; I have too great a favour to request on my own account, to be able to concern myself about others. I again entreat you to shorten my probation, and name the day that is to make my beloved Gertrude for ever mine."

"Ah, Montgomery!" said she blushing, "should

"should you press me to enter so hastily into a state from whence there is no appeal?"

"Ask your own heart, my love. Mine can truly swear, in the face of Heaven, to love you through all the changes that frail mortality is subject to; still it would be Gertrude, my almost idolized Gertrude, whom death can alone sever from my affection."

"Montgomery," answered she, "you know my heart; its most ardent wish is to merit your approbation; but yet allow me time to reflect on so great a change."

"And will you not also allow something to an affection so tender as mine—an affection that follows me in all my pursuits? I now see you but for a short space every day; I shall then see you all the day; you will accompany me in my walks; your voice will cheer my hours, and I shall find happiness in contributing towards yours. I know my beloved above disguise, and can allow for delicacy; but where can even

 that

that sentiment be cherished with greater tenderness than in the bosom of an affectionate husband?"

"Montgomery—I—I cannot enter on this subject," answered she, hesitating, and turning her face from him; "consult Mrs. Stanhope."

"For that permission, a thousand thanks; and now let us change the subject. The colonel proposes to have some few alterations made at our northern cottage, which he means to enlarge by two apartments. Perhaps I may some day enjoy the company of my Gertrude in my peregrinations among my native wilds—shew her the haunts of my youth—climb with her the mountain's height to view the boundless prospect, and admire the power of the great Architect, who has arranged the whole in that country with tremendous magnificence."

"You shall there, Albert," answered she, "tell me every little event of your youth, relate to me your father's fortitude and unblemished

unblemished honour, and endeavour to teach me your mother's softer virtues."

Montgomery kissed her hand in speechless rapture.

"I am a romantic girl, you know," continued she; "for early impressions are not easily to be effaced. I shall there sometimes indulge the thought that I am perhaps acting under her immediate cognizance, and shall please myself with the idea that she is contemplating my weak endeavours to render her Albert happy, who kindly, though with weak partiality, has overlooked all my errors."

"That word shall ever be a forfeit, my angelic Gertrude," said he, saluting her, and pressing her to his heart; "and if again repeated, shall be charged double."

"Montgomery," answered she blushing, "this is not generous; you intrude on my partiality."

"Do not say so," replied he: "are you not the dictator of my every action, nay, my almost every thought? and for this

 offence,

offence," added he, "permit me to repeat my uncle's frequent reproof to me, when I have forced him, as he says, to manœuvre, *Was it not entirely your own fault?*"

"I shall endeavour to be more cautious in future," returned she.

"And I will endeavour to act consistently with the delicacy of my Gertrude."

At that moment Mrs. Stanhope, the colonel, and Frederic entered, the former having arranged the measures for repaying the colonel the money advanced for her nephew.—"What, a *tête-à-tête!*" said the veteran, as he entered; "what the pies have you done with Marian?"

"I thought she was with you, madam," answered Gertrude.

"I have not seen her, my love," replied Mrs. Stanhope.

"In answer to a reproof of Miss St. Austyn's," said Albert, "she declared that she was going to try the effect of her smiles in dispelling Frederic's gloom; but I fear she has not been as good as her word."

"Did

"Did she indeed say so?" asked Frederic eagerly.

"She did, but I dare say she has walked into the park, and forgotten it," returned Gertrude.

"Frederic, go and seek her," said the colonel, "and claim her promise."

Frederic hesitated—"I dare not," replied he.

"Miss Montgomery shall not be intruded upon," said Mrs. Stanhope: "that care particularly devolves on me."

"My dear madam," answered the colonel, "you are enough to spoil all the young girls in the world! What harm can there be in St. Austyn's telling her tea is ready? It will only save your footman the trouble."

"But is that the extent of your design, colonel?"

"Pardon me, madam," returned the veteran; "but if you ask questions that oblige me to answer falsely, with whom doth the sin lay?"

"My dear aunt, I entreat you to permit Frederic only to go and tell her that tea is ready," said Gertrude.

"I have no objection to his informing her of that circumstance," answered Mrs. Stanhope, smiling.

St. Austyn appeared irresolute.

"Zooks," said the colonel, "the young fellows now-a-days have no spirit. I did not much wonder at Montgomery, bred among the mountains like a savage; but for you, St. Austyn, it astonishes me!"

"Would to Heaven," replied Frederic, "that I also had been bred among the mountains, just such another *savage!*"

"Don't stand confabulating here," interrupted the colonel; "go, and tell her that Mrs. Stanhope waits for her."

Frederic obeyed, though not with the alacrity of a lover, and had hardly left the apartment, when Gertrude, running after him, said—"My dear St. Austyn, you in all probability will find Marian in the summer-house at the end of the great walk, as that

that is her favourite retreat; tell her I requested you to come for her, and should she dispute your word, produce this evidence—it will be undeniable." So saying, she untied Marian's picture, which she wore, and presented it to him; then without waiting for his thanks, hastily re-entered the apartment.

Frederic could at first scarcely believe his sight, but secured by so powerful a talisman in his bosom, he proceeded in search of Marian with increased spirit, and hardly reached the spot Gertrude named, when her melodious voice, accompanied by the harp, struck his ear. He remained listening until the song was concluded, and then entered cautiously, and by a gentle tap informed her some one approached; Marian, in her usual lively manner, answered—"*Open locks whoever knocks.*"

Frederic opened the door, but felt too much trepidation to advance hastily.

"Mr. St. Austyn, and alone!" said she, rising

rising. "Is it well done, sir, to break upon my privacy?"

"Ah, madam!" answered he, "do not let this event add to your displeasure; I simply came to request your return, by the mutual desire of our joint friends."

"The colonel, I presume, sir?"

"Yes, madam—the colonel, your brother, Mrs. Stanhope, and Gertrude."

"Mrs. Stanhope and Gertrude!" repeated she, with an air of incredulity.

"Yes, madam, both. The latter, fearful of my being disbelieved, desired you would give credit to my truth at sight of this picture," drawing the portrait from his bosom.

"I will wait on them," answered Marian with great confusion: "I will follow you instantly, sir."

"May I not have the honour of attending you?" replied Frederic.

"I thank you—I shall but detain you," picking up her work and music-book. "I beg

beg your pardon, sir, but you forgot to give me the picture."

"Give it to you, madam! I received it from Gertrude, and excuse me if I say I will never relinquish it; the original I have offended beyond all hopes of pardon, beyond almost daring to ask it; but for this copy, it shall be the companion of all my wanderings; 'tis the representative of the only woman I ever loved, or ever can love—the woman I dared insult, and who justly hates and despises me."

"Mr. St. Austyn," said Marian, with emotion, "why will you think I hate you? Indeed you do me wrong."

"Do you condescend to say so?" replied he. "For that assurance accept my thanks, and let me entreat you to honour me yet farther, by being explicit on a subject that gives me infinite concern."

"Explain it, sir."

"I fear that my presence in Dorsetshire is displeasing to you, in which case command me; I will find an excuse to leave

it, and hasten to my dear cottage. Oh, Miss Montgomery, there again shall my distracted head press the same pillow on which yours formerly rested, and my perturbed heart seek the oblivion of sleep, where yours, the seat of innocence and virtue, has reposed."

"How is it possible you can surmise your presence disagreeable? I truly rejoice at your return. Gertrude's brother must be estimable to me. Did I not assure you, on your arrival, that all was forgotten that you could wish so? did I not give you my hand in token of friendship before our joint friends? And I now repeat the assurance," holding out her hand.

For a minute Frederic's soul appeared to be quitting its tenement; he turned pale; his trembling hand was unable to receive the offered one of Marian; his knees failed, and he sunk at her feet in silence.

Marian, seriously alarmed, leaning over him, said—"Mr. St. Austyn, you distress me beyond measure; for your own sake,

nay,

nay, for mine, if I have any influence, endeavour to overcome feelings that must destroy you."

"Oh, Miss Montgomery!" said he, recovering in some measure, and bathing her hand with his tears, "forgive this involuntary emotion; those only who could estimate my sorrow for the offence, can judge the extent of my transport at this pardon."

"You believe me then?" answered she. "Be assured that my anger has long since subsided: I could not be the enemy of Mr. St. Austyn, unless he himself made me such."

"May this day, this hour, be ever propitious!" said he, kissing her hand, "that has witnessed such a weight taken from my heart!"

"And now," returned she, "that you allow your pardon granted, let us, I conjure you, hasten in; oblige me by conquering your emotion, as it will only afford food for the colonel's humour."

"I will obey you; but surely, Miss Montgomery,

Montgomery, something must be allowed to the feelings of a man snatched from the brink of despair, and soothed with the voice of an angel."

"All I have to say," replied she, in her usual lively strain, "is, mind how you behave, or perhaps in future you may not find the celestials so soothing."

They left the summer-house, and walked toward home, Marian conversing freely with him by the way.—"Mr. St. Austyn," said she, laughing, "I know not whether I shall sue in vain; but if you would oblige me by entrusting the portrait you have with me for a few hours, I should consider it an obligation." Frederic looked distressed, and her request remained unanswered.

"I think you will not disbelieve me," continued she, "when I pledge you my word to return it in the course of the evening. I will honestly confess it is designed merely to turn Gertrude's weapons against herself;

herself; for her sending the picture was but a retort on a trick I played her."

"I dare not dispute your pleasure, madam," answered St. Austyn; "but remember, I entrust you with what is dearer to me than life." So saying, he drew the portrait from his bosom, pressed it to his lips, and presented it to Marian.

They then hastened forward, and as the walk to the house was straight, discovered at a considerable distance Gertrude, with the colonel and Montgomery, watching for them at the window.

CHAPTER XV.

A Lover accused of Folly—A Present rendered doubly estimable.

The colonel, as soon as he saw Frederic and Marian advancing, said—"Egad, I am glad we sent him! for I'll be hanged if he don't look more cheerful; but for that *sly boots*, Marian, I can form no judgment, except that I think she looks even more arch than usual."

"Then must I look to myself," replied Gertrude, laughing; "I have repaid her the trick she served me with my portrait, by giving hers to Frederic; and I have no doubt but she will contrive to return the obligation."

"Indeed, Gertrude, you have not behaved

haved well to your friend," said Mrs. Stanhope. "I will not scruple to declare, as both parties are absent, that could such an union be formed by mutual inclination, it would give me pleasure; but Miss Montgomery shall not be influenced, and any relative of mine that would attempt it, should meet my severe reprehension."

"Did she not, my dear madam, serve me the same trick in respect to the miniature?" said Gertrude.

"True: but remember, she well knew that in your heart you would not be displeased," answered Mrs. Stanhope, in a low voice.

"Suppose, my dear madam, I should conjecture the same?" replied she in the same tone.

Frederic and Marian at that moment entered, when the colonel said, "Why, St. Austyn, you have been a plaguy long while. You have kept Mrs. Stanhope waiting."

Frederic replied, that he had not been

so fortunate as to meet with Miss Montgomery immediately; and the tea being brought in, a conversation on common topics took place.

The teathings being removed, Gertrude said carelessly—"*A-propos*, Frederic, I lent you Marian's portrait; will you favour me by returning it?"

"Mr. St. Austyn was polite enough to give it me," answered Marian quickly, to prevent Frederic's reply; "and as I see you set so little store by it, I shall take care how I give it to you again."

"You jest," replied Gertrude—"I am convinced that my brother has not given it to you."

"Really," said Frederic, "you judge wrong. I have, however unwillingly—"

"Mr. St. Austyn, I conjure you," interrupted Marian, "do not by any means satisfy her curiosity; let it suffice that she has given away my portrait; never more shall she have the disposal of it."

"Indeed, Gertrude," said Mrs. Stanhope smiling,

smiling, "you are caught in your own trap."

"If you have the miniature, Marian, which I greatly dispute, why do you not produce it?" asked Montgomery.

"Because it is not in her power," returned the colonel; "she is a sly gipsy, we all know, but not cunning enough for that: St. Austyn is not such a fool."

"Indeed but I am," answered Frderic.

"What, have you in reality given it to her then?" said the colonel with astonishment.

St. Austyn bowed.

"I did not think you was such a blockhead, a novice, a *greenhorn*," said the colonel. "What the plague, do you suppose your sister gave it to you for that purpose?"

"My sister's kindness I will ever remember; but I could not dispute Miss Montgomery's commands."

"Not dispute her commands!" repeated he. "Poor fellow! poor fellow! you are far gone indeed; even a strait jacket and a

dark

dark room, I fear, will scarcely cure you. Why, zooks! if ever you get married, I suppose, if your wife desires it, you will darn her stockings, plait her night-caps, and comb her lap-dog."

"I certainly should endeavour to oblige her," answered St. Austyn, laughing, "though I fear I should perform so awkwardly in all the requisites you have named, that I should never more be employed."

"Why, truly," said Albert, "I must take my uncle's side of the question in this business. You don't deserve such a commission as Miss St. Austyn entrusted you with."

"Your opinion was not requested, Mr. Albert," replied Marian. "Remember your obligation to me much on the same score, and let that keep you silent. As my uncle truly observed, you fled in the heat of the battle, yet was not ashamed to share the spoils."

"Well said, little *sauce-box!*" rejoined the colonel; "he deserves that rap on the

knuckles—

knuckles—faith, he was in a fine *quandary*! If I had not had a sugar-plum to stop his mouth, I know not what I should have done to pacify him."

"Miss St. Austyn's picture was indeed a powerful bribe, sir," answered Montgomery—"a charm I shall take care how I relinquish."

"You will do well," answered Marian; "I am glad you know its worth; and to prove to you that I place some value on mine, I shall endeavour to bestow it where I think it will be taken more care of than with its last possessor. My uncle and Albert have got a painting of me; Gertrude has forfeited her right; my dear Mrs. Stanhope has the original, which I hope she will never part with; and therefore," continued she, with a small hesitation of voice, and a glow of crimson on her cheek, "I think I must give it to Mr. St. Austyn, if he will accept of it, as a token of friendship, and to requite his entrusting it to my honour." St. Austyn received the portrait

in speechless rapture, kissed the hand that gave it, and hastily left the room.

"My dear, dear madam," said Marian, taking her place on the sofa by Mrs. Stanhope, "tell me if I have done amiss. I could not otherwise convince Mr. St. Austyn I forgive him; he may now be assured of it."

"My lively girl, I had almost said you could not do amiss; your heart is a faithful monitor, whose dictates I never yet found erroneous. For my highly-favoured Frederic, let me thank you; I trust he will merit that you should forget his former errors."

"Marian," said Gertrude, throwing her arms around her neck, "how delightfully have you turned my little arts against myself!"

"You young witch," rejoined the colonel, addressing his niece, "do you mean to kill us all with kindness? There's poor St. Austyn cannot stand it; and, egad! I believe I must go and keep him company."

"Let

"Let me thank you, my beloved sister," said Albert, kissing her, "for sealing beyond dispute Mr. St. Austyn's pardon."

"Really," answered Marian, "you astonish me; I appear to have performed some wonder that charms all my friends, and am at a loss to discover my own merit. If it costs so little to please," added she, bowing round with great cheerfulness, "you are welcome to command me at all times."

"My dear Marian," said Mrs. Stanhope, "I must warn you not to let your enchanting spirits, and wish to oblige your friends, lead you in opposition to your own inclination."

Frederic at that moment returned, and the discourse ceased. His features some hours before were marked with melancholy, and his spirits depressed; but now the utmost animation enlivened the first, while the latter, though greatly exhilarated, still possessed a chastened expression of love and gratitude, that gave double advantage

vantage both to his person and manners in the eyes of his friends.

CHAPTER XVI.

Inconveniences of a Bachelor's Life—Folly of late Marriages.

Early the next morning Mr. Vincent arrived from London, and was received with pleasure by the colonel, who willingly discharged the debt of hospitality he had received in the West Indies.

In the case of Miss Southern, as related by Mrs. Stanhope, Mr. Vincent saw in her only an object of pity, and declared himself ready to disregard the unhappy failure of her youth, if she would accept him.

"Well, well," said the colonel, "Miss Southern

Southern and you must settle that business between you. I am lately become a convert never to interfere in those affairs; a third person would only confuse her, and make her *hum* and *haw;* so we will speak, to her friend dame Mosely, and she will give you an opportunity to converse with her on the subject. But, Vincent, how the devil came it into your head to think of getting married? Zooks! I believe I shall be left alone in the honourable fraternity of bachelors."

"It was my intention to die single, until I saw Miss Southern," answered Vincent; "but should I be successful in my address, I shall be happy to have it frustrated."

"So, egad! you may," replied the colonel; "for, after all, a bachelor's is a sorry life—I know that by experience. I believe it was that which made me so *crusty,* for I was as melancholy as an unbraced drum before I met with Montgomery. To live for oneself alone, to eat alone, to drink

alone, and to creep to bed alone, to a man who loves society, is a severe punishment."

"You are so warm an advocate for matrimony, colonel, that I should not wonder to see you get married."

"What, at sixty-four! No, no, Vincent, all is right here," hitting his forehead. "I have good children, that fulfil all the duties requisite at that age; and even had I none, I would never be *registered* for a fool. I know nothing that moves my anger sooner than to see old blockheads of either sex, with eyes like expiring rush-lights, hobbling to church, when, in all probability, a small spot in the church-yard will speedily supply all their wants. Why the plague cannot they engage a nurse, swathe themselves in flannel, drink their posset in peace, and be satisfied without making old age ridiculous?"

Mr. Vincent having paid his compliments to the colonel, requested to see Mrs. Mosely and Betsey; when he pleaded his cause so powerfully, that though he

was

was not accepted, it was evident that her shame of past events alone occasioned the refusal. He however did not despair, and by an application to Mrs. Stanhope, in a few days procured more lenient resolves in his favour.

As the vessel in which he was to sail had but a short period to remain in England, the formalities of time were obliged to be dispensed with; and in a fortnight after Mr. Vincent's return, Miss Southern gave him her hand at the altar; the family at the Vale, and that at Blackwood, attending the ceremony. By the permission of Mrs. Stanhope, Gertrude presented Betsey with five hundred pounds; as did also Marian, the colonel supplying her for that purpose. This, together with some valuable presents from Mrs. Stanhope, equipped the young bride in a manner to do as much honour to Mr. Vincent by her appearance, as her beauty was to do credit to his judgment.

The whole party saw with pleasure, during the few days that Mr. Vincent re-

mained at Blackwood after the marriage, that the attentions of a well-bred man had their full effect on the youthful bride, who looked up to him with a gratitude and affection that time could not fail to strengthen.

The parting was felt on all sides, but particularly by Mrs. Mosely and Mrs. Vincent; though it was somewhat mitigated by Mr. Vincent's passing his word to bring her to England in the course of the ensuing year.

Montgomery had, immediately on receiving Gertrude's permission, applied to Mrs. Stanhope to fix a time for their union; when, much against his inclination, though he acquiesced with a tolerable grace, that lady appointed a month. During this interval, Mr. Vincent's marriage with Miss Southern had taken place, and Frederic had made some advances in Marian's good opinion, though his fear of giving offence, and

and her liveliness, prevented her declaring any thing positively in his favour.

The fourth day after Mr. Vincent's departure completed the time of Albert's probation. The settlement and all preparations being ready, Montgomery appeared so light of heart as almost to *tread on air*; while, on the contrary, Gertrude was more timid than she had lately been. She would fain have stipulated to have the marriage private; but that was so totally obnoxious to the colonel, that she speedily relinquished it.

"What," said he, "the day of all others that I glory in, that gives me such a niece, to sneak as if we were doing something we were ashamed of! Never can I willingly consent. Were it in my power, there should not on that day be a sad heart."

Mrs. Stanhope, who wished to satisfy both parties, proposed that, as the colonel had before intended to give a rustic fête to his dependants, it should take place; but

 that

that their own circle should remain as usual—a resolution the colonel acquiesced in, and that satisfied Gertrude.

CHAPTER XVII.

The most serious Action of a Person's Life.

AT length the long-wished-for morning arrived, when Montgomery, accompanied by the colonel and Frederic, at an early hour reached the Vale. They had waited some time before Mrs. Stanhope, with her niece and Marian, entered, when the first said, as Albert saluted the trembling Gertrude—"My endeavours to inspire this silly girl with a proper degree of courage, are unavailing. I hope you will be more successful."

Albert took his place at her side, and by

by numberless little attentions and pleasantries, attempted to relieve her thoughts until breakfast was over, and the carriage drove up to take them to church.—"Now, my love," said Albert, in a low voice, "I know you will exert yourself to shake off this depression, lest the world should think Montgomery not so happy in your affection as he flatters himself he is. If you love me, Gertrude, whence this diffidence? To me this appears the happiest day of my life; while, on the contrary, I am grieved to see it distresses you."

"Indeed," replied she, "you wrong me; my heart anticipates your satisfaction, but I cannot forget—Oh, Montgomery! how could I ever be so regardless of delicacy as to promise——"

"I could almost be angry enough to take my forfeit thus publicly," interrupted he. "Observe, my Gertrude, that I give you fair notice, if you persist in remembering what every one else has forgotten, I will be the veriest tyrant in nature. My

heart has room for nothing but love and you."

"Come, come, Albert," called the colonel; "I wonder you have patience to stand gossipping there. It is one of the rudest things in the world to keep a parson waiting; it is an affront to his office. I thought you had more religion."

The colonel led Mrs. Stanhope; Montgomery followed with Gertrude, and Marian gave her hand to Frederic; the ladies, with Albert, going in Mrs. Stanhope's carriage, and the colonel and Frederic in the chariot.

It was evident that Gertrude struggled to collect her spirits during the way, and was in a great measure successful. On entering the church, Montgomery was so delighted at the change, that as he led her up the aisle, he could not refrain whispering his thanks.—"Albert," replied she, in a firm though low voice, "I regard myself at this moment in the presence of my Maker, and on the point of taking an oath

which

which my conscience approves, my friends ratify, and Heaven sanctions, as it unites me for ever to a virtuous man. My fears are therefore dispersed; I will not dread to give my hand where I have already given my heart."

Montgomery led her to the altar, and the ceremony immediately began, during which her composure never forsook her: the colonel presented her to Albert, who received the gift with a satisfaction visible to the whole congregation.

The rites concluded, Montgomery led her to the vestry; where, with a tender, though respectful salute, he thanked her for the honour she had done him. Then presenting her to Mrs. Stanhope, who warmly embraced her, mutual congratulations took place. The colonel and Frederic next saluted her, when the former, turning to Marian, gave her a hearty smack. Then pushing St. Austyn forward, he said—"Why the pies don't you give

my niece joy of her new sitser? You need not be afraid, she wont bite you."

Frederic advanced timidly towards Marian, and kissed her glowing cheek; and after a few minutes, the party re-entered their carriages, and proceeded to Blackwood, where the colonel had so warmly entreated to have the marriage celebrated, that it was complied with.

Though all the surrounding farmers, with their wives and children, as well as the lower tenantry and dependants, had assembled to see them pass to church, yet all had been silent and respectful; but on their return, the congratulations resounded from every quarter; for no act of oppression or exaction had disgraced either of the families with their tenants: and for the lower order of dependants, in cases of necessity, they were ever sure to find a ready friend at either Blackwood or the Vale. Thus they could not but rejoice at the union of their benefactors.

The

The morning was passed as usual, Mrs. Stanhope considering it as the most prudent method of supporting Gertrude's spirits; but after dinner the sound of instruments, and the hilarity that reigned in the great hall, put all other ideas to flight. The colonel was one moment in the parlour, the next shaking hands and drinking with his tenants; and towards evening enjoyed the satisfaction of introducing, for a short space, Mrs. Stanhope, with her niece and Marian; who having received their compliments, the good people were entertained with a ball and supper, equal to the plentifulness of the dinner they had received.

Mrs. Stanhope and Marian remained for some days entirely at Blackwood with Gertrude; after which they returned to the Vale, though their time was, as usual, so much passed together, that they might be said to constitute the same family.

Frederic continued his sister's guest, and had the satisfaction of contemplating

the happiest of all marriages—one founded upon esteem and friendship, matured by reflection, and sanctioned by the approbation of one whom experience and virtue had rendered the competent guide of youth. Montgomery's attention to his wife appeared to increase with time, as did also her sense of his affection; while the colonel, delighted with both, seemed to have no other pursuit than their happiness, and the mutual good of his fellow-creatures.

Montgomery, on his marriage, with the approbation of his uncle, had settled an independence of a hundred pounds yearly on Mrs. Mosely, leaving it to her choice whether she would continue at Blackwood, or occupy a small house of theirs in the vicinity; but much to the satisfaction of all parties, she preferred her old situation, and would willingly have declined the annuity, had that choice been allowed her.

Among the compliments on Mr. and Mrs. Montgomery's marriage, they received

ed one from Mr. Edward Montgomery, who congratulated them warmly, although he observed that he should not pay them a visit until he returned to the country the ensuing year; as he did not wish to see his cousin Marian, until every gleam of hope on his side must be extinguished, which he understood would speedily be the case.

As Albert read the letter to the party one day in Mrs. Stanhope's absence, Marian said—"I wonder what he means by that; I answered him candidly at first; how can he be at a greater certainty?"

"He means," answered the colonel, "that you will get married, I suppose."

"Indeed, if that be his meaning," replied she, "he is far better informed than I am."

"Why, no one can think you intend always to tyrannize over that silly fellow, St. Austyn, who sits mourning like a sparrow on a house-top. Egad! my heart ached for him on Albert's wedding-day; his

his sighs and groans were enough to disturb the solemnity."

"Really," replied Marian, laughing, "if, as you seem to hint, I occasioned them, I sincerely beg Mr. St. Austyn's pardon; but I must honestly confess, though I stood by his side during the ceremony, I did not hear any such dismal sounds."

"There is none so blind as those that wont see, nor any so deaf as those that wont hear," replied the colonel. "But I know you are an honest girl, and will not deliberately tell a lie—don't you think he loves you?"

"Indeed, colonel," replied Frederic, "you shall not distress Miss Montgomery; she knows my heart, and——"

"Zooks!" interrupted the colonel, "who the plague wants your interference? Sure I may have liberty to ask my own niece a question?"

"Vanity, sir, may mislead me," returned Marian; "I am not a competent judge."

The

The colonel shook his head.—"A girl at twenty, and not a competent judge of a man's heart, would be a phenomenon," replied he; "or rather it would shew her deficient in the knowledge natural to her sex. Why, you are all as sharp-sighted as hawks in such cases."

"And pounce upon the poor *innocent* sparrows as they sit mourning upon the house-tops, and carry them off in our talons. Is it not so, sir?" returned Marian.

"Not quite," answered the colonel. "For example, were you to carry off St. Austyn in your claws, I dare say he would be such a fool as to glory in his danger. But, jesting apart, you must be—nay, I know you *are*, satisfied with St. Austyn's conduct; and, as sly as you are, you have no dislike to him; therefore cannot you now for once lay aside your turnings and dodgings, and tell the poor fellow what he has to expect?"

"Really, sir," returned Marian, with great confusion, "you ask such extraordi-

nary

nary questions, and form such unjust surmises, that I am not prepared to answer them."

"My generous friend," said Frederic, "let me conjure you to drop this subject; I am sensible of your kindness, but Miss Montgomery must not be distressed: too well do I know the value of her pardon again to hazard, however innocently, her displeasure."

"Marian is too just," said Mrs. Montgomery, "to blame my brother for the colonel's humour: she is not to learn Frederic's affection, and at her own time will tell him her real sentiments. If she did not think favourably of him, even before this she would have informed him that he had nothing to hope."

"Ah!" said Frederic, "had I but the most distant expectation, how speedily would months, days, or even years, elapse! but my former guilt flies in my conscious face, and I dare not plead for such a favour."

"There is no girl," said Montgomery, with

with a smile, "that can perform a good-natured action with a better grace than Marian; and I know she will, one of these days, give Frederic a specimen of her manner of conferring an obligation."

"If you catch me here again without Mrs. Stanhope," answered Marian, "I will forgive your behaving as ill as you please. You would none of you have ventured either to bluster, coax, or flatter me before her."

"We well know she spoils you," answered the colonel. "But come, be a good girl, and for *my* sake tell St. Austyn he may hope; mind, we leave out time."

"For my sake, my sister," said Gertrude, kissing her.

"And for mine, my Marian," added Albert, affectionately.

St. Austyn threw himself at her feet.—"I have nothing to plead," said he, "but mercy. Let my doom be happiness or misery, I will receive it without repining."

"Sure never poor girl was so beset," answered

answered Marian. "I have no objection to Mr. St. Austyn—nay, sir, no raptures; I will not be pressed on the subject. Albert once told me, that my uncle proposed, if you thought of me, your serving as long as Jacob served for Rachael: now, as I think that an excellent motion, if you are willing, so am I."

"Though fourteen years would indeed be a tedious probation," answered Frederic, "I accept the condition with rapture. My good conduct and submission may perhaps shorten the term."

It may easily be surmised, that from this day Frederic was an accepted lover; though, for many months, no time was appointed to complete their union, Mrs. Stanhope even more warmly than Marian protracting it, in order to be convinced of Frederic's entire change of manners.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Close of a vicious Life—the Satisfaction arising from a virtuous one.

About four months after Montgomery's marriage, they received a visit from captain Watson, and from him learned the final close of a life of riot and debauch. Berners, on separating from his wife, had proceeded to Lisbon, where he resided some time, and formed an intimacy with a rich merchant's wife, from whom he frequently accepted large sums. Some suspicions arising, the parties were watched; in consequence of which, as was surmised, they were detected, though no accusation or complaint transpired; but in the course of twenty-four hours the lady was in a convent, and Berners found in the road to his

his lodgings dead, from four stabs in the back with a stiletto.

The English ambassador had made all possible inquiries after the murderers, though without effect. Some gentlemen then at Lisbon knew Berners, and mentioned his being a short time since in the army, in consequence of which, an account of his death had been sent to the agent to transmit to his friends. Mrs. Montgomery was not present at this intelligence; a circumstance that afforded her husband great satisfaction, as he afterwards related it to her with so much caution and tenderness, that though she could not but shudder when she reflected how nearly her fate might have been connected with so bad a man, yet, in the encircling arms of Montgomery, her tears soon ceased to flow, and her grateful heart found peace.

Captain Watson remained with the happy family two months; and as they proposed accompanying Frederic into Yorkshire, they proceeded with him to London,

London, from whence they continued their way, the ladies with the colonel in the coach, and Albert, with Frederic, on horseback.

The whole family were received with joy at the mansion, which was a scene of festivity during their stay; and Mrs. Stanhope and the colonel, with Montgomery, promised to pass some months of every year there.

After paying and receiving visits from all the neighbouring families, in the month of July it was proposed to complete the excursion, by visiting the cottage at Strathnavern, of which Frederic still declared himself proprietor.

As the weather was fine, the journey was pleasant. The only apparent difficulty was, that when they arrived they would be indifferently situated for lodging, as the cottage was too small for such a number; but this was easily removed by the colonel and Frederic declaring they

would,

would, in case of necessity, sleep at Mr. Home's.

At length they reached Melness, and proceeded to the cottage, through the Wilds, whose dreary appearance struck Mrs. Stanhope and Gertrude, as it had before done the colonel; but when the little dwelling came in view, so snugly sheltered by the surrounding mountains, the contrast was so striking, that it communicated double pleasure. At length they reached it, when an exclamation of astonishment at once escaped the colonel, Albert and Marian, as towards the back it had been enlarged nearly one-half, and also many improvements made in front.

"What is this?" said the colonel. "Egad! I believe the enchanters have been at work, and reading my thoughts, have realized them; or am I now dreaming? for, faith, the house looks as large again as when I was here last!"

"Oh, Frederic! why have you done this?"

this?" said Montgomery. "This then was your obstinacy in not giving up the house."

"Can you wonder," replied Frederic, laughing, "that under such able masters I should learn to *manœuvre* a little?"

"No, faith! 'tis to me a proof of your ingenuity," said the colonel. "I like you the better for it; I see you will be a fellow after my own heart."

"My dear uncle," answered Montgomery, "the alterations are so great, that the expence must have been the same."

"Well, sir, St. Austyn can afford to lay out a little money in whimsies while he is a bachelor; and for you, if you don't know how to accept a favour from a friend, egad, you are not fit to confer one!"

"I do accept it," answered Montgomery—"accept it as a proof of brotherly affection, which will render this spot delightful, as we can now reside together."

"Though," said Mrs. Stanhope, "I have hitherto been an enemy to some of the

the colonel's surprises, yet I confess this of his pupils gives me pleasure, though I know not the alteration."

Gertrude thanked her brother warmly; but a glance from Marian, who was silent, spoke more to his heart than all the rest: some months before he would have thought it cheaply purchased with any thing short of life.

Barbara, in her white coif and plaid gown, stood ready to receive them, and scarcely appeared more glad to see Montgomery and his sister than St. Austyn. On entering the house, they found all prepared with minute exactness, servants necessary to render their stay commodious, and the new apartments furnished with a neatness that did credit to the taste of the director.

"For pity's sake, St. Austyn," said Montgomery, "tell me how all this has been performed in so short a time? You have never been absent, and, as my uncle observes it almost appears enchantment."

"Honestly

"Honestly then," replied Frederic, "those alterations were begun about a month after my fortune was cleared. You know that during the last six months I have been at no expence; my remittances therefore have more than sufficed for those trifles: but remember, Montgomery, as the colonel once said to me, *Don't expose yourself*; they were done by *your* order. The servant that resided here with me was my agent, and a builder that is employed on the Yorkshire estate was the architect; I only had the merit of *recommending* him to you."

"It is as clean a trick," said the colonel, shaking Frederic by the hand, "as if I had done it myself; and so, Mr. *Presto Pass*, I suppose you can wave your wand, and give us a supper equal to our lodging."

"Barbara in that case, I have no doubt, has done her best," answered Frederic. "She has known of our coming almost as long as myself; and from her care, I naye

no fear but that the apartments are well aired, and fit to be immediately used."

The spot gave rise in Marian's bosom to many uneasy reflections; but the fear of throwing a shade over the pleasure of her friends made her struggle to suppress them, and on the whole the evening passed cheerfully. On the ensuing morning, resolved to indulge her thoughts undisturbed, she rose early, and walking through the garden, where every object was familiar to her, entered a private walk into a little wood at a short distance, but had advanced but a few paces when she met St. Austyn reading. Marian's spirits were not so playful as usual. St. Austyn pressed her warmly, even in the place that had so frequently witnessed his sighs and repentance, to consent to accept his hand. Marian hesitated, but at length a promise was given to consider on the subject before they left Strathnavern.

After a stay of six weeks, they prepared to return to Yorkshire, but not until they had

had rendered themselves so necessary to all the poor around, that they regarded their departure as a common misfortune; and three days previous to the party's leaving Strathnavern, rising in a body, they waited on the minister, and insisted on his revoking the excommunication that had been pronounced against the family of Montgomery, under pain of pulling down his house—"Hoot awa, man!" said the speaker, "'tis nae for elders to curse those wha God has blessed; and think ye not that he blesses those that fill the hungry kytes of the bairns with breed, claithe the bare backs of the auld, and visit the sick? If he do na approve sic as they, what will become of elders wha canna boast sic gued deeds?"

The minister at first appeared refractory, and Montgomery, with his uncle and St. Austyn, endeavoured to quell the tumult; but it was not to be repressed, and the denunciation was at length annulled.

St. Austyn did not suffer Marian to for-

 get

get her promise, and in consequence a time was appointed for their marriage, which was to take place in Dorsetshire.

On their return they remained a week in Yorkshire, and about the same period afterwards in London, where Frederic, with his zealous friends, the colonel and Albert, had the settlements drawn on the same plan as those for Mrs. Montgomery.

Never had time moved so tardily with St. Austyn as from the period of receiving Marian's promise until their arrival in Dorsetshire, where, in a fortnight after their return, their marriage took place.

As the whole party were too much attached to each other to bear the thought of separation, Frederic and Mrs. St. Austyn resided with Mrs. Stanhope, and in their visits to Yorkshire, where they resolved to pass some months every year, the whole family accompanied them.

Some months after the marriage, they received letters from Mr. Vincent and his wife, each mentioning the other with a degree

degree of affection that delighted their friends.

Cured of his errors, and united to the woman of his choice, the virtues which the hand of nature had implanted in the bosom of St. Austyn expanded, and rendered him daily more estimable to his wife and family, who frequently, as they considered his present conduct, could scarcely refrain saying—"Was it possible this man could ever deviate?"

Marian, the pride and glory of her husband, and the affectionate and beloved niece of Mrs. Stanhope, continued to preserve her liveliness through all the domestic duties of a wife and mother.

Mrs. Stanhope, surrounded by her family, and supported by the conscious virtues of her own heart, smiled at the lapse of time, which did not place a single wrinkle on her brow, that did not add a fresh rivet to her friends' affection.

The colonel's eccentricity and good hu-

mour continued the companions of his old age; and, surrounded with the children of Montgomery and St. Austyn, he declared himself the happiest old fellow in the world.

Montgomery and his Gertrude, when spoken of by the colonel, were ever called the *sweethearts*, and not inapplicably; for the affection of the husband and wife were so blended with the attention of the lover, and the delicacy of the beloved, that a common observer would have concluded them such. When alone, Montgomery would gaze on her with the enthusiasm of a first affection; and as he encircled her and the smiling infant on her bosom in his arms, exclaim—"If you had been but half so enchantingly lovely, my Gertrude, when I first knew you, as at this moment, my uncle's rhetoric would have had its full effect, and my poor philosophy and restraint have been destroyed in an instant."

"Ah, Montgomery!" she would reply,

reclining

reclining her cheek on his, "encompassed with such relatives, blessed with such a husband and children, Heaven has surely gifted me above the common lot of women."

THE END.

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